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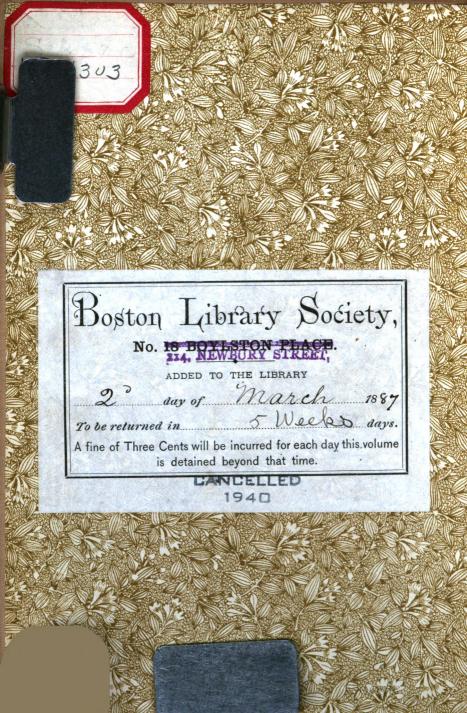
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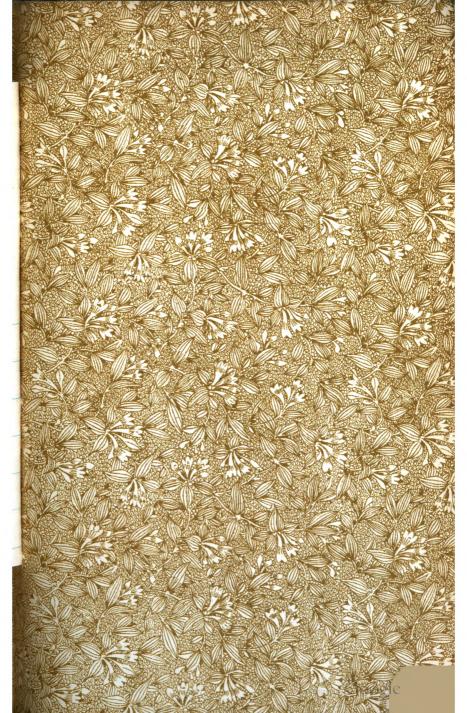


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THE CHANCELLOR OF THE TYROL



THE

CHANCELLOR OF THE TYROL

BY

HERMAN SCHMID

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

BY

DOROTHEA ROBERTS

VOL. II.

London
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ERRATA.

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Pages 5 and 9 for "father," read "Father."

Page 81. Line 24 for "pacem," read "Pax."

Page 120. Line 21 for "Verbatum," read "Verbatim."

Page 166. Line 16 for "Marshal," read "Martial."

Page 272. Line 18 for "Sherriff," read "Sheriff."

him his eternal rest!"

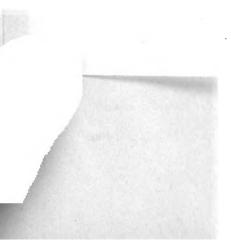
[&]quot;Amen!" said Gravenegger "close his eyes, place the crucifix between his hands, brother Felix."

The old man did this as gently as if fearing to awake a sleeping infant. Then he said,

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CHAPTER XVI.

PAGE



THE CHANCELLOR OF THE TYROL.

CHAPTER XI.

SUNSET.

pomine nunc dimittis servum tuam in pace" repeated Father Gravenegger with solemn unction, as he bent himself over the bed where old Malaspina lay in the death agony. For a time he stood gazing steadfastly at the thin, white, face, so still and sharp.

"I believe all is over. Come here, brother Felix, look at him, you have had more experience than I in these cases," he said.

A palsied, white-haired old monk, who had been kneeling at the foot of the bed, rose and came to the Jesuit obediently. His rosary was in his hand, a prayer still stirred his lips. He placed his hand on the heart, held his face close to the mouth of the dying man, then, with awe in his voice, he said,

"There is no pulsation, no breath. The Lord grant him his eternal rest!"

"Amen!" said Gravenegger "close his eyes, place the crucifix between his hands, brother Felix."

The old man did this as gently as if fearing to awake a sleeping infant. Then he said,

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"Shall I go and give orders for the bells to be tolled?"

"Not yet, I have been commissioned to examine our dear Father's papers, to see that all is in proper order; I can only do this while we are quiet, before his death has been made known. Stand by the door while I unlock this chest, and give me instant notice if you hear any one approaching—I must not be interrupted in my task."

Obedience had become second nature. The old monk placed himself by the door. Originally there had been a spark of nobility in him, which now rebelled against this robbery of the dead. Accustomed as he was to subdue every personal feeling, he yet found it hard tostand passively by, while Gravenegger, putting his hand under the pillow, drew out a bunch of keys. With one of these he rapidly unlocked a chest that stood by the wall, and began to search with nimble fingers amongst its carefully arranged books and papers. Each bundle of documents-neatly tied up and docketted-was examined after being fingered by the Jesuit. Brother Felix could not refrain from an occasional glance, first at the face of the dead man, then at the priest. He noticed that one of Malaspina's hands had fallen from his breast, that it heaved slightly, as if with a faint respiration, "Most reverend Father" he whispered hurriedly, "Father Alexis is not dead! He is moving—he is coming to himself again!"

Noiselessly, but as quick as lightning, Gravenegger closed the chest, put one paper already taken out, aside, and replaced the keys under the pillow.

Then he stood calmly watching the face of the old man. Life did indeed seem to be returning. The muscles twitched, and presently the eyes opened; sight was gone, however. He tried to look round, but all seemed to be dark to him.—Then he murmured, in a thick, hesitating way, "Where is he?"

"Who? Whom does my dear brother desire to see?" asked Gravenegger—Brother Felix stood also by the bed,

"I sent for him," said the latter, "saying it was a matter of life and death, but he has not come yet."

The feeble lips moved, but no sound issued from them. This had been then indeed the last flicker of the lamp of life—the last effort of the spirit to move the poor lifeless clay. Its tenant had now fled—It had made one supreme effort to fulfil some trust. The spirit had come back, as a man might return to his falling house to save some valued possession.—The dying man made a feeble attempt to move his hand. It refused to obey. His breast heaved with one last struggling breath; a rattling sound came from his throat; his body stretched itself to its fullest length; a grey shade crept over his face,—all was over! Life had now indeed fled.

"There is no deception about it this time," said the, priest, "the Signaturæ mortis are not to be mistaken.— Now to our task with all speed. But tell me—what was it that brought him back? Who was he asking about so anxiously?"

"His Excellency Chancellor Biener."

"The Chancellor!" repeated the priest with a sort of veiled triumph in his tone. "Do you know at all why he wished so much to see him?" The old brother made a negative gesture. Gravenegger now betook himself once more to his search amongst the dead man's papers, muttering to himself excitedly,

"Calling for him in the very throes of death! Nay it almost seemed as if his anxiety to see him had brought life back again—surely that meant something important—

momentous-"

He started—with difficulty suppressed an exclamation

of surprise and joy—Biener's packet had that moment fallen into his hands. He read the superscription—"'Property of Dr. Wilhelm Biener, to be delivered up into his own hands only,'—sealed too, with both Biener's and Malaspina's signets! This explains the mystery. This was what troubled his last moments so sorely,—this packet—Very well then; I must discover what are its contents. Brother Felix, it seems to me I hear footsteps in the corridor?"

The old man opened the door softly, and went into the passage outside. Gravenegger took advantage of the opportunity to slip the precious packet into an inner pocket of his black robe. Brother Felix came in again. "Some one is coming," he cried, "it is himself—The Chancellor!"

In another moment the documents were replaced in the chest, the keys restored to their original place. "Kneel down, Brother Felix, and pray" said the priest in a low voice, "I command you by your spiritual obedience, that to whatever questions may be asked you reply, that our brother has only this moment departed this life—that nothing has been touched since, neither keys nor papers. Do you think you understand me?"

The old brother knelt down at the foot of the bed. Gravenegger assumed the look of one who neither sees nor hears anything earthly. A knock was heard at the door; it opened hastily, without further delay or permission asked. Some one entered—Gravenegger rose from his knees and looked, with well feigned astonishment, at the intruder. On recognising who it was, he bowed deeply, saying

"How? Your Excellency has taken the trouble to come here!"

"To the sick bed of my friend. Is there anything

so strange in that?" replied Biener, whose brow had contracted at sight of the Jesuits.

"Alas! the sick bed has just become a death-bed. Our excellent Father Alexis Malaspina is no longer able to value as it deserves this friendly effort—"

"How? dead! Already dead?—" said Biener,—a dark suspicion rising in his soul. He put aside the priest and gazed long and sadly at the remains of his old friend. Malaspina lay as if in a peaceful sleep, his face looking even more calm and benevolent in death than it had done in life.

"It is so indeed! He has fought and conquered— The bonds that fettered his kind spirit are loosened now—Earthly griefs can wound him no more. Yes, father, he was indeed an excellent man.—Why is it that we never feel the full worth of our friends till we have lost them?—He was right in supposing that he would die suddenly."

"He was seized this morning; it was a kind of apoplexy—He never fully recovered his senses; he had drawn his last breath but the moment before your Excellency came in."

"Indeed!" said Biener. He fixed his eyes gravely and searchingly on Gravenegger, then he added "From the coldness and stiffness of his body, I should judge it to have been longer since he departed?"

"No—I assure your Excellency it was not so. We, whose business it is to face death so frequently, can tell better than those who seldom see it what its aspect is. Even a man of your shrewdness may be mistaken in such a matter as this—Ask Brother Felix here—He can assure you that life was only that moment extinct—Had not Brother Alexis died only that instant?"

The old man made a gesture of assent-kissing his

beads devoutly as he did so. The Chancellor looked keenly at them both—

"But what need for all this affirmation? Why should you call a witness? It grieves me, deeply grieves me, that I could not be permitted to press his good hand once more—to take my earthly farewell of this noble old man. But, since it has been so decreed inexorably, why should we prolong discussion by his death-bed? Let us proceed to the business about which he so much desired to see me, to speak to me."

"Had he indeed a wish to see your Excellency? Do you know, Brother Felix, I am displeased with you—you knew perhaps that our dear father wished to see his Excellency—and yet you did not tell me of it—How was this?"

"Father Malaspina had taken charge latterly of a document of mine. The packet has a superscription, stating that it is my private property," said Biener, "He being dead, I will now resume charge of it myself."

"Certainly, by all means," said Gravenegger, with a perfectly unembarrassed air. "Our dear Father belonged as you know, to the Society of Jesus. The College, in the first instance, receives all his worldly goods, I have no doubt but that your Excellency's packet will be restored to you in due course. Meanwhile I am about to assume the charge of all his personalities on behalf of the Order—not a serious business either."

"Possibly not, and you may, as you allege, be empowered to undertake it; but this packet is mine. I ought to have received it from Father Malaspina's own hand, I must search for it without delay."

"I am ready to assist you in any way I can" said the Jesuit obsequiously. "Brother Felix, inform us where we shall find the keys, and where our dear father kept his private papers."

The old brother, with drooping head, came up to the bed and drew the keys from under the pillow. Then he pointed to the chest "Open it yourself, Excellency," said Gravenegger, "since the Order is less favoured with your confidence than this dead man seems to have been."

The chest was opened. Biener's experienced eye had soon noted all its contents. A dark suspicion that had seized him the moment he saw Gravenegger in possession of the dead man's room, became instantly a certainty; the packet was not there. All search for it proved vain.

"Has your Excellency not succeeded in finding what you seek, then?" asked the Jesuit, with interest."—Our deceased brother may very possibly have placed a packet of value in some more private receptacle. Let us try if it may not be forthcoming elsewhere."

"Is that your opinion?" said Biener, with some difficulty restraining his indignation.

"Why, yes. Such a packet may easily be noticed. You say it is superscribed by you and has both your signet and Father Malaspina's?"—Biener's eyes flashed fire.

"And pray how do you come to know that the packet was sealed by both of us? Most certainly you were not informed by me of the fact—That I can aver," he cried.

The Jesuit possessed a marvellous command over his countenance, yet it was impossible to prevent a slight flush from rising to his cheek at this most unlucky slip. Presently he contrived to say, with an air of ingenuousness,

"What can your Excellency be thinking of? How could I possibly know it, if you had not mentioned the fact?"

"How?-by making yourself acquainted with it. By

ocular demonstration, of course! The presumption is, that all the contents of this chest have already passed through your hands.—"

"How can your Excellency dare to say so!" cried the priest with well-feigned anger "ask Brother Felix here—he has not quitted the room for one moment, —ask him, whether the chest has been opened or not."

Biener looked sharply at the old monk; his eyes were cast down, his lips moved rapidly, yet no sound came from them—then he said scornfully,

"You may spare this poor old man the utterance of the lie with which he is striving now so bravely. It is just as certain that this chest has been tampered with, as that Father Malaspina had been dead for some time when I got here—You have opened it—you have abstracted certain papers from it that are my private property.—You have them in your possession at this very moment!—I demand them of you, you shall restore them to me instantly!"

The Jesuit in a moment laid aside all his obsequiousness of manner. Drawing himself up proudly, he said, "To such imperative demands, I do not deign to reply." He crossed the room with an assumption of proud indifference as he spoke; but before he could reach the door, Biener had intercepted him. Standing before him, he exclaimed "Not one step farther shall you go, till my stolen property is restored to me!"

"Gently, Excellency, you forget yourself strangely—Would you dare to lay violent hands on the Lord's Anointed?" said the priest, turning from him carelessly,

"I would—I do,—if he desecrate his holy office—Fraud and deceit can only be met and put down by the strong arm!"

"Try to control yourself. I can with the greatest ease rid myself of your importunities. And yet some words you

uttered just now recur to me. They pleased me; I am prepared to be forgiving, I may find that I can even come to an amicable understanding with you—You said 'it was only when too late that the true value of our friends became known to us.' I like that remark. Now if I were to tell you, that I believe a coalition might be possible between us two, to our mutual advantage, would you be disposed to hearken to me?"

The Chancellor measured him scornfully; he replied curtly, "I have no wish for more intimate relations with you. What I have already seen does not inspire me with sufficient confidence."

"Nevertheless I will give you a chance—Now, if you can, listen quietly for a few moments to me. Brother Felix, go and tell the most reverend our Provincial Superior that our dear father has fallen sleep in the Lord. Give orders that the bells be tolled——"

"No" cried the Chancellor," the monk shall not leavethis room before we do. How can I be sure that my packet is not concealed about his person?"

Gravenegger shrugged his shoulders contemptuously, "Well then, let him remain," he said, "go into the furthest corner of the room, Brother; I forbid you, by the sanctity of your vows, to hear one word that we may say!"

The poor old man obeyed servilely. Then the priest, drawing nearer to Biener and lowering his voice, said, "You suspect me—you are my enemy?"

"I am an enemy of the principles you profess and carry out, I am not your personal enemy."

"My principles are to all intents and purposes myself, therefore, I repeat, you are my enemy. You ridicule me, you speak evil of me, no sooner was I appointed spiritual director to her Highness, than you tried to prejudice her against me; and yet, I now offer you the hand of good fellowship."

"That is a very remarkable conclusion."

"Why so? If I confess that so far I may—If, I say, I may have been too unwilling to admit your statesman-like qualities, your weight in the counsels of this land, I will now atone for it, I will honour you as you deserve—I need you for the good cause."

"The cause you consider good you--"

"Every man must consider his own the best, of course, but I denominate mine 'good' with justice. Against its sanctity, there can be no appeal, against its authority, no one need attempt to strive. You only delude yourself if you think to resist us.—You miscalculate the tendencies of the times in which we live, you are mistaken in your premises, you have not a chance."

"That, at all events, is new light to me."

"But none the less, it is true. You have treated the prisoners taken in the Floitenthal with a leniency that savours of encouragement. Such a judgment seems likely to encourage the ingress of heretics into our land,—whereas, a wholesome terror should have been inspired. They may take it that they are to mingle with us freely, with immunity—"

"And I hope it will be so. I trust that when peace is fully established in Germany, toleration may spread to our land also."

"No—it will not do so. Were such toleration proposed, the church would not recognise it. I do not affirm that, after the lapse of centuries, the States of Europe may not be able to conclude such a peace, but our age is inimical to it. The Tyrol, especially, must not take the initiative in any such direction. This land has been chosen, singled out by God, to be a bulwark against infidelity, a stronghold for the old established church."

"Time alone can prove whether it be so or not."

"It can, it will, prove it. Your new ideas must perish,

and you with them. Your fall is as certain, as is your powerlessness to set me aside. I am established as Duchess Claudia's spiritual director; no power can shake me!" He paused, waiting for some reply; as Biener did not speak, he went on "You waver? Your silence means that you are shaken? What do you think of it?"

"I was thinking of a day when a similar siren's song was sung to me by the dead lips yonder," said Biener, looking sadly at the dead white face lying near them, "He was not so accomplished in Italian minstrelsy as your Reverence. The good old man suffered; his throat was unused to such utterances. He retired in your favour, knowing you for an expert and skilful virtuoso. You hope that your solo may result in a duet. Silence is come instead. Believe me, if persuasion were likely to avail with me, that dead man would not have pleaded in vain."

"It is an experiment, nevertheless, that might be worth trying. A way might be found to heal our present discord—we might—"

"As soon might fire and water coalesce."

"Well then, at least let us each keep to our own special province. You may say, perhaps, that the limits are not easy to define—but do you yield to God what is His. Do not interfere in spiritual matters, in temporal ones you can make or mar, as you think best; leave matters of belief to us."

"And the point where temporal begins and spiritual ends is to be defined not merely by the Church but by your Society! You are to reign supreme, in fact. Possibly you may end by declaring all questions to be spiritual ones. The Emperor will retain then only the semblance of power? No, father. You are wasting your time, your breath. Before entering into a coalition with any man, I must first be assured that he means to play

me fair. Convince me of this, then. Set my just suspicions at rest. Before going any further, convince me of your own honesty and integrity. Restore my private property to me! Give me what, on no pretext, can be said to belong to the Church."

"But, your Excellency, have I not positively declared?"

"And I declare as positively, that you have taken my packet. Give it back to me, or I shall have to force you to yield it up, just as I would make any other thief disgorge his booty, when taken in the act."

"Answer me this then—Once for all, do you absolutely repudiate all thought of coalition with me?"

" Ì do."

"Now, once for all, I will try to solve this mystery as to your packet. I have heard there are secret recesses in this wainscotting here. Permit me to examine the woodwork—It is more than likely that Father Malaspina deposited papers of value in some secret receptacle—"

Biener stepped back a few paces, in order to let the priest feel round one of the oaken panels. Presently Gravenegger cried, "Yes! here it is -Here is the spring -It is giving way-We shall soon see now." In fact, a portion of the heavy wainscot did begin toslide back in response to his pressure; yet it did not seem to disclose any shelves. A small door became: visible, which opened, as the panel slid back; a steep staircase could be dimly discerned behind it. Before Biener could intervene, the priest had slipped through the narrow opening, and had drawn the sliding panel. after him. The woodwork closed again of itself, leaving no trace by which the uninitiated might guess how it had been moved. A muffled voice behind the thick wainscot could just be heard "Fare you well State: Chancellor" it said, "Remember this day, when you desire to be reconciled to me again."

"To be so out-witted! So over reached—tricked" cried Biener, striking his forehead with his hand,-"and thou, good old friend! lying there calm and unconscious! Thy sacred remains had no power to prevent so scandalous a fraud! Yet it has been all my own fault; my blind confidence has led me into this pitfall. How often was I warned! And how careless I was of those warnings. Farewell! Risen, as thou art to those eternal realms, released from all earthly solicitudes, vet may'st thou perchance look down on me, and pity me. The crafty knave, who has crept into thy post of confidence, has eluded me this time; yet I have a talisman, by which I can yet save myself from his machinations." He gently laid his hand, as if in benediction, on the icy brow of the dead man; then he left the chamber of death calmly, and with his usual quiet dignity.

Years rolled on—and the predictions of the Jesuit seemed far from fulfilment.

Wilhelm Biener remained at the head of affairs in the Tyrol. A few of the more narrow-minded Tyrolese felt aggrieved that a stranger should so long hold office in their country. The Italians had hated him bitterly, ever since the meeting of the Innspruck Diet, yet it seemed as if envy, hatred and malice were but so many unruly horses that needed only his strong arm to curb them, when yoked to the chariot of his power. The Jesuits made no sign as yet, not that they loved the man who held the reins, but that they hoped to place, some day, a stumbling-block in his path.

The Chancellor guided the chariot of state skilfully, warily. His happy domestic relations had the effect of softening his caustic humour; and he was less sarcastic than in his earlier years.

His industry was untiring, and was always directed towards benefiting the country. Claudia's unfailing trust and belief in him, supported him; it was as a wall of brass surrounding and defending him. In their relations they were less intimate; but the bond that united them as Duchess and Chancellor, became even closer than of old.

But it was in the hearts of the peasants that the Chancellor reigned supreme. They never could forget how bravely he had always defended their rights and liberties. The burghers, too, led and supported by the brethren of the Sacred Palm Tree, began to esteem him as he so well deserved. So years went by,—and all went well with Wilhelm Biener.

To all outward seeming, it was so also with Claudia. The little figure on her old time-piece hammered out the hours as merrily as ever, her apartments looked as they had looked six years ago; but the beautiful woman who occupied them was pale and sad. The struggle to extinguish that engrossing passion, which had rooted itself so fatally in her ardent southern nature, had been too much for her. Like some extinct volcano, you felt that the fire had consumed all the freshness and spring of her life, that the ashy crust covered a smouldering flame beneath. The duties she had formerly delighted to fulfil, seemed now a weariness—an exertion to her. Indeed she now lived, for the most part, the life of an invalid.

A curtain, generally concealing one end of her room, had been drawn aside, disclosing a small oratory; an altar, with a large crucifix above it, on which a lamp was always burning—and before it a devotional chair. On this Claudia was kneeling, her silver and ebony rosary passing through her fingers, while she listened to some words spoken by Gravenegger. When

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he had ceased to speak, she remained for a time sunk in reflection; then she rose gently, laid her hands on the altar and said very calmly,

"You may leave me, father. My decision is made."

"But are you quite sure that you have the strength to abide by it, my daughter? Can you trust yourself? You will have to encounter much opposition, violent protests, eloquent arguments, can you resist all these, unaided?"

"I can. I much need rest; this I shall gain now."

"May the Lord send down His blessing upon you! I glory in His Holy Name that He should have lent such power to my frail human voice."

"Yes, father—it is true that, but for your ceaseless persuasions, I might have regarded this step differently, but I know how pure your motives are, that no earthly taint sullies them—You seem so removed from worldly things, so regardless of power, of advancement. Your preaching is so inspiring—you are thinking only of how to win souls for heaven."

"I am but a weak, sinful mortal," said the priest hypocritically, "yet your Highness reads my heart truly."

"And that is why I give myself to your guidance in this matter. Go now, and inform the State Chancellor that I would see him. I will announce to him my decision." Gravenegger bent reverentially before her.

"Be steadfast, your Highness. Steadfast—The palm shall only be awarded to those who endure even unto the end."

When left alone, Claudia began to pace the room, as had always been her wont when troubled in mind. She repeated to herself the Jesuit's concluding words, but echoing as if from afar off, another voice was saying to her,

"No cure! no none, but only death."

In a few minutes, the Chancellor was kneeling before her, kissing her hand in respectful greeting. His carriage and bearing were unchanged, the only sign of increasing years was that his hair had changed from brown to grey.

As was usual, they met calmly. What at one time seemed so impossible, had become second nature, so complete was their self-conquest. As he rose to his feet again, Biener said anxiously "Your Highness looks ill at ease,—agitated. Dare I ask how your health keeps? The nation is as solicitous as I, to be assured that you are well?"

"Ah!—that is a solicitude that neither need continue to feel for long, now! How is it with you and with, —How is Elizabeth?"

"Well, I thank your Highness, yet with one wish still ungratified."

"To what wish do you allude?"

"The wish to see your Highness once more—to thank you—"

Her agitation became almost painful, she could scarcely say "Ah yes! it is long, very long, since I have seen the dear creature. Nearly—was it not?—not since—" she could not finish. After a pause he went on "Not since your Highness's journey to Poland—"

"No? I scarcely know myself how it has come about. She might have come, she might have called at the palace—"

"Deign, your Highness, to remember how often she has done so, and, each time, some unforeseen obstacle has come in the way of her long hoped for interview."

"Yes!—we Princes are slaves. We belong to others, not to ourselves. We can indulge in no personal wishes. Well! for the future, it will not be so with me at least."

"I do not comprehend—Twice now your Highness has made mysterious allusion to some change?"

"You will soon know all; but first I would speak of yourself. Hear me, Biener. My dear, dead Lord commended you to me when he lay on his death bed. It has often been permitted to me to prove how kindly and favourably I regard you; and yet it may be a gratification to you to be assured once more—now that my reign is almost a thing of the past—from my own lips, how true and trusty a servant, how upright and excellent a counsellor, I have ever found you, during all this long and troubled reign of mine."

"Your Highness, I have consecrated my life to the service of my mistress and of her realm, what could be more dear and precious than to know that she approves me?" he said fervently "This land may find out too, that I am its faithful servant some day—Will you not relieve my great suspense—?"

She gave him a document, which she had taken from a table near her. "This explains matters," she said gently. "As Chancellor, you may have to prepare other papers that I must sign—" She gazed at him sorrowfully as he read the document. Presently, he grew pale as death, his hand shook, so that he could scarcely hold it, "But, your Highness, this cannot be possible?" he said, "God forbid that you should seriously entertain so fatal an intention as this."

"I do seriously entertain it. It is my steadfast, irrevocable decision; long thought of, long matured."

"Then let me beg you to recall the words you uttered just now, the praise you bestowed on me. Since you wish to nullify it, I blush to have believed that you meant it. You say you have long thought of taking this step, have discussed it,—come to an irrevocable decision, while the man you deigned to call your truest

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servant, your most devoted counsellor, has been left in total ignorance of any such intention. Do not try to sweeten the bitter draught. Little as I anticipated this from you, I am man enough to drain it to its dregs in all its bitterness!"

"Nay! not so, Biener. I was only silent because it was a matter that did not affect the nation. It was my own private affair."

"What? you suppose you can lay down your crown and sceptre, give up to another the guidance of your realm, and call it your own private affair? Has the Tyrol then no voice in what so deeply affects her welfare? Your Highness was not wont to act thus in former days. Even in her private affairs, Duchess Claudia was not used to shun the counsel of a man whom she once honoured by the name of friend."

"And that you will ever be," cried she, touched by the keen anguish that his voice betrayed. His eyes filled with tears. "Claudia is your friend," she added, "surely it needs no new words to assure you of that."

"Then your Highness has been constrained to do this. You are in the meshes of some fine spun web. This decision has never been come to unaided. You have been led on to it by those who would rid themselves of your State Chancellor—to whom he is an obstacle."

"Biener! you venture too far.---"

"I must speak out! This is no spontaneous result of your Highness's own judgment. I know, too, the viper that is poisoning your life—The Jesuit has suggested this."

"Your old suspicions again! But be reassured,—I have come to this decision of my own free will. I am weary of the strife. As the hart panteth for the water brooks, so does my soul thirst for repose,

time for holy reflection, and that I can only have in retirement."

"Repose? reflection? The Elysium of a monk! A Princess will not find they can satisfy her."

"I am a woman," she said, after a little pause, "A woman should be content to rule her household. A throne is not her sphere."

"And Claudia de Medici can speak thus?—she, who for twelve years has ruled this kingdom with all the strength and wisdom of a man? No! your Highness, you, who are conscious of having done this, cannot really think so slightly of yourself as to wish to retire from your natural duties. Every human being here below, is placed, either by birth or choice, in that position most suited to the development and perfecting of his or her faculties—powers. It is only by the fulfilment of the duties which naturally belong to that position, that we can hope to be happy and at ease. Is Duchess Claudia so faint-hearted as to wish to desert her post?"

"I am forced to abdicate. I have much need of rest."

"No, your Highness! I know your great soul better than your other counsellors can do. Rest—you will not find it; your temperament demands active occupation, so long as life is left to you, your only true repose will be in change of work. You must die in harness, like a true soldier. It is so with all great souls who have received much from the Heavenly Father—of them, much is required."

Claudia shook her head, veiled in its white drapery, sadly—

"You over estimate me, I have not a great soul. I have never been great. I have considered everything well. My decision is unalterable—irrevocable."

"It is not! No, your Highness, it cannot be so! As

long as that document is unsigned by you and by me, it is null and void. Until we both have placed our signatures to it, it is not too late to repent. Oh, can you not perceive that this is a plot? Is not the motive for urging you on to this act patent to you?"

"Ever-ever, these strange suspicions!"

"And can you prove them to be groundless? Your Highness, it is a deep-laid scheme, not against you, -against me. They hope to drive me from office. I am an intolerable restraint upon the officials—the Italians—the priests. They tried bringing open accusations against me; your Highness upheld me.—They tried to undermine me secretly; your Highness still had faith in my integrity, they were only brought to shame. So long as your Highness reigns, I am not to be dismissed, so they have hit upon this ingenious device. Artfully working upon your longing for repose,-trying to make you distrust yourself. In order to hasten the day when I am to be deposed, your Highness is to graciously consent to be deposed yourself. I can recognise the head of a stinging adder peeping out. That serpent is Gravenegger."

"Be silent!" she cried, and she began to pace the room with disordered steps, "I cannot listen to such words. You are most unjust, prejudiced, against the Reverend Father. Once before, I allowed myself to be over persuaded, to distrust him; now, I am fully convinced of his integrity. I know that his thoughts are fixed only on heavenly things. No earthly taint sullies his motives."

"Yes! So it may seem to your Highness, but he only points with one arm to heaven, that the industry with which he pursues mundane things may not be apparent."

"You have always suspected him unjustly!" she cried "you are most prejudiced; you remember how

unreasonably you accused him of having taken some papers at the time of Malaspina's death—"

"And was I not justified in suspecting him?"

"At first, I may have thought so when I had only heard your side of the question, but now, I must say, you are not. The packet has never been found, the old man had grown forgetful, almost childish. He either had lost it or hidden it away in some secret recess, impossible to get at."

Biener looked into her face for a moment, silently, then he said "God keep your Highness in your present state of innocence! Yet it is just because of that beautiful and unsuspicious nature of yours, that it is so sad to know you influenced by such a man as Gravenegger. He declared war against me, war to the knife too, on that fatal day when we first met in your presence. I see that hostilities have begun-nay, I am well nigh defeated, before I was even aware he had begun his campaign. Yet, not so! The documents are not signed yet. Oh, your Highness must re-consider this most disastrous decision! The Crown-Prince will not be of age for more than two years yet. Then his reign commences naturally, your Regency comes to an end. Why should you forestall the time? It will be an evil day for your subjects, when you are obliged to desert them; why, then, hasten that evil day? Why call upon an immature youth to fulfil such important duties? A boy, passionate, headstrong, most likely to sweep away all the good and wise enactments you have made—to ruin the land!"

She had seated herself by the table and was leaning her head upon her hand thoughtfully. "You judge him too harshly. It is true Ferdinand is impulsive—perhaps rather boyish and frivolous—but his heart is sound and good. It may help to mature and

strengthen his character to have more cares and responsibilities devolving on him."

"On the other hand, he may prefer to renounce all cares and responsibilities, to give the reins into the hands of his minions, or of the priestly party who are eager for power. It pains me to wound your Highness, as I must be doing, but I cannot be silent! The Crown-Prince causes me much anxiety, much fear. His life is so blameable, so idle, so dissipated. No study pursued, no occupation save useless sports. His days frittered away amongst idle companions; actors and singers, his chosen associates, not because he loves art or music—only because its professors divert him."

"You allude to his infatuation for the Trentinara?—that is quite over. I have talked with my son. He promises me, most solemnly, that he will think no more of her. He is full of the best resolves. My Confessor, too, assures me that Ferdinand has not seen the singer for a long time past."

"What an omniscient person your Confessor is!" said Biener bitterly, "he even stoops to the character of spy—I fear, notwithstanding his reverence's assurances, I have but little faith in this sudden reformation, I fear it may need a longer experience to assure us that his Highness is really developing exalted qualities. Wait at least until we can judge of the stability of this change in the Crown-Prince, your Highness. Defer it for a time. Take time to consider the step more fully!"

She reflected long-profoundly-then she said,

"Too late! I cannot now draw back."

"But wherefore?"

"I am no longer free to do so" she said reluctantly. "I am bound—in conscience——"

A silence, as of the tomb, ensued. At last, Biener said "Then I can only pray your Highness to forgive me

for having taxed your patience so long and fruitlessly. Yet it never used to be your wont to inform me the last of all your counsellors of such important decisions!"

"Biener, you must not speak of old times; nor must you be resentful. Take these documents—let them be completed. Then inform the Emperor that my regency is over." After a little pause and with averted face, she handed him another paper, "and this also, concerning my dowry" she added "about its continuance—"

"So all is already drafted! It is indeed full time that Wilhelm Biener laid down his seals of office. He is no longer needed here. He owes it to himself to resign all his dignities. Deign to allow him to do this, as a last favour, your Highness!"

As he spoke, he took off the great chain and tried to lay it on the table beside her. She pushed it away impatiently, crying "No! I cannot, will not, permit this. I command you to retain the Chancellorship."

"Your Highness has no power to do so," he cried proudly. "Your confidence is withdrawn from me; besides, the name of Biener cannot be affixed to a false statement."

"How do you dare-?"

"If I sign this paper, I give my sanction to a lie. This is an order on the treasury for the payment to Duchess Claudia, on her abdication, of a specified sum, said to be the same amount as the dowry paid into the state coffers, for her, when she married. Your Highness, your marriage portion did not amount to one half of this sum."

Claudia crimsoned with anger "How!" she cried "Is this the vaunted gratitude of the Tyrolese people? Am I to be dismissed as a pauper? Am I to be a suppliant to the charity of my son for a means of subsistence? To have

no establishment, no means of bestowing alms? Is the dethroned Duchess to beg or starve?"

"Then stay, your Highness," he cried, eagerly, "Do not abdicate—Yet, if it must be so, do you doubt that the Tyrol will gladly endow her beloved ruler with double, treble, that paltry sum named here? The money will be no difficulty. What I repudiate is the false ground on which it is claimed. Your Highness's name must not be sullied by any false statement."

"Biener!" she almost gasped.

"I have said it. A false statement! Ah, how strangely you must be misled, to think of countenancing such a document! But you never suspected it yourself. This is the second time the priest—Your Highness" he went on, coming closer to her as she stood there in pained and confused silence, "I once served a noble, regal woman who could sacrifice all, her life, her heart, her love,—for her kingdom. Her honour then weighed above everything; can that queenly woman stoop to a falsehood? I served an exalted mistress, if she exists no longer my service is also a thing of the past, I am free-I implore your Highness to receive these seals of office."

"No! You shall see that you have misjudged me, she cried "I do value your counsel. I will act on it, while it is still permitted to me to do so."

She seized the order on the Treasury, tore it in two, and cast the fragments on the ground.

"Oh, how great your Highness still can be!" he cried in a shaken voice "you are the same noble Claudia as of old! Be that high-hearted woman in all things! Let the sun burst through all obscuring clouds.—Take back your decision."

Her bosom heaved, her thin cheek glowed, as his ardent eyes beamed upon her, yet she was able to whisper,

"Not so."

"My mistress!" he cried, yet more fervently, "One supreme moment of our lives is present to me always—a moment when I was permitted to call you by a dearer name-—If any echo of that name lingers in your heart still, let me appeal to it—Let me conjure you, by that dear memory, not to abdicate!"

"I must abdicate."

He bent his head respectfully, then, drawing back, he-said "Then I can but protest against it, and that protest shall be my last act as Chancellor. I also resign office."

"No—no! You shall not do so," she cried, "the policy that has blessed this land must not be changed; the wisdom that guides its counsels shall not be lost to the kingdom, because I abdicate. You, you only, Biener, can secure to this realm the peace and prosperity it needs. I will talk with Ferdinand—you must not forsake him—"

"You little think to what you would pledge me. The Prince dislikes me personally. He despises my advice—disapproves of my policy. If I remain in office, my ultimate fall, my ruin, is inevitable. Now I might retire with safety and honour. My mistress, you cannot be so merciless as to demand this of me?"

"Biener, I do, I must demand it. The hope that you remain, is all that can save me from despair!" She came closer to him, she looked up into his face tenderly, tearfully, "Yes, Guglielmo! that supreme moment—Can it ever fade from my thoughts? Your voice has the echo of that hour in it always—always to me—Guglielmo! I made a bitter, a frightful sacrifice once, and for you. Can you not make a smaller sacrifice for me? If I now entreat you to do this for me, can you still refuse me?"

He sank on his knees before her, shaken to the very depths of his soul "No," he said "I cannot refuse you

Even if it leads me to destruction, I will do it. For Claudia, I would sacrifice everything!"

He hurried from her presence without another word, and, as the door closed upon him, she fell on her knees before the crucifix. There she lay, her face buried in her hands, for hours.

Some weeks later, Ferdinand Karl was declared of age to ascend the throne, and Claudia announced to a Diet, assembled for the purpose, that she had devolved upon her eldest son the cares of state; praying the people of the Tyrol to honour him as their sovereign and to serve him faithfully.

She had been much beloved by her people during her reign, and her abdication filled the country people with dismay and grief. They had poured in from all the valleys—thronging the city, and especially the Cathedral, where the young Duke, on his accession to the throne, was about to be invested, by his cousin Philip of Spain, with the order of the Golden Fleece.

The central aisle, with its magnificent tomb of the Emperor Max, and its brass statues of the kings, had been kept clear for the procession, while the side aisles were given up to the numerous spectators. In the choir, and close to the high altar, two canopied thrones were placed, covered with crimson velvet and adorned with gold fringes and tassels, cushions were placed near, on which lay richly illuminated missals ready for use during the ceremonial. One side aisle was reserved for members of the cabinet and high officials. Here, many old acquaintances were to be seen, trying to catch a glimpse of the ceremony between the red marble pillars supporting the arches of the aisles, and the huge marble monuments that intervened.

Schmaus had contrived to find space for his unwieldy

bulk, while the imposing stature of Herr Gröbner von Wolfsthurm almost eclipsed little Pappus, who stood near. Count Pideneck, slim and elegant, dressed to perfection, had just been recognised by Gröbner.

"So you have come all this way to behold our young knight duly dubbed, Count!"

"Oh, by all means. When fleeces of gold are floating in the air, they may descend on any one, you know."

"Scarcely!—Where is our Laureate to-day? His carmen are, doubtless, in readiness—"

"Hush! there he is, at your elbow, and sore enough too already, on this very subject. But how does it come about that a country bumpkin, like myself, is able to make you au fait with your own Court gossip here? Pappus might perhaps have had the order for an ode if the State Chancellor hadn't vetoed it."

"What, Biener?"

"Yes—His saucy wit has once more snuffed out the poor little laureate. It seems, he told her Highness that, as the croaking of frogs and screaming of peacocks always presage bad weather, it would be unlucky to let her son's pæans be sung by the little poet!"

Grobner suppressed a laugh, and Pideneck went on, "It has been decided, however, in order to spare the poor little poet's feelings, that there shall be no ode at all. The Jesuits have arranged to perform a play, 'The Hope of the Golden Age' it is to be; and an Italian—a certain Camillo Menti from Mantua—repeats some appropriate stanzas. The wind begins to blow pretty steadily from Italy, it seems to me."

"It is said the young Duke is going to marry a Tuscan Princess you know, so he favours his mother's people. His new chamberlain is one of them."

"What? has poor old Kleim got his dismissal?"

"He is made court barber-hard lines enough for the

good old fellow to have to come down to the razor. Hissuccessor is one Marello, a dusky looking little spit-fire enough."

The trumpets and kettle-drums here burst in with a flourish. Schmaus remarked,

"That is to announce that his Highness has arrived."

"Can you see, at all?" Pideneck asked Gröbner.

"To say truth, that worthy but substantial woman, Frau Cymburgis von Masovin, retains too many of her living proportions, now she is in marble, to let me see much."

"Let me report proceedings then—The Duke is dressed in white, unarmed; a handsome stripling, truly! Many a fair lady's heart will ache for him before all is over! Count Spaur gives the gilt sword to the Bishop; the Duke kneels, three blows are given with the flat of the weapon; he swears the oath of allegiance to the order, his hand upon the Missal—Well! shall we get out before the rush comes at the end?"

The Te Deum swelled grandly through the arched roof of the Cathedral, the great organ being strengthened by trumpets and kettle drums, and the triumphal strains announced the conclusion of the ceremonial.

"You mentioned a name, just now, that seemed familiar," said Schmaus, as they left the Cathedral, "Marello, was it not?"

"A fellow formerly in the service of Montecuculi."

"Ah yes—I recollect now all about him. By the way, what news have you of the worthy Count?"

"He is still at Vienna; high in favour, both at Court and in all other distinguished circles there. The Emperor has sent back Marello to be Ferdinand's servant. Probably his old master might not object to it, if he got a chance to return also."

"Sits the wind in that quarter? I see,—the State

Chancellor goes, the Count comes! said Pideneck, smiling significantly. Schmaus looked concerned.

"The Chancellor goes? who says so?" he asked.

"An event easily predicted—his days are numbered; why should he remain in office now?" said Pideneck smiling.

"I'm not so sure of that, he knows full well how to take care of his own interests" said Schmaus gravely.

Gröbner laughed aloud; passing his hand through Pideneck's arm he remarked, "Oh yes! so you may well think, President; but he has got no post for any son-in-law of mine, you must remember—We must attend the reception of the newly dubbed knight. Perhaps we may be able to discover there whether Biener's star is still in the ascendant or not."

The young Duke had just arrived when the three entered the audience chamber. His mother stood by the throne at the upper end of the room, dressed all in black and with no ornament save her tiara of diamonds. Biener waited at the foot of the throne, to the right. The ladies and gentlemen of the Court, the officials, the civil and military officers who filled the great apartment, were all in full dress.

Ferdinand Karl was greeted by a burst of cheering as the came in. He did indeed possess a singular charm both of person and manner. His countenance was sweet and expressive, his voice and address prepossessing, nay, winning, and all who looked upon him were filled with hope for the future.

He had grown to be very tall, but was rather slender and delicate looking; his bright brown eyes shone with pleasure, and his fair girlish cheek was tinged with a brilliant flush, as he came up the room, bowing on all-sides, in response to the warm greetings of his subjects. His fair curling hair, bright and abundant, fell over

his laced collar. A certain dignity had been imparted to his boyish face by the solemn rite just concluded. Could so promising a morning presage aught but a beautiful and prosperous day?

While the acclamations were renewed, again and again, Biener who was watching the Duchess anxiously, noticed that she shrank, as if pained to see how completely her people seemed to forget her presence. Presently she overcame the unworthy impulse, and descended the steps of the throne. Then meeting her son, she embraced him tenderly, raising him with gentle force as he tried to kneel to her, and clasping him in her arms with tears in her eyes.

"My son! may you never lose the impression of thisday, may you be worthy to succeed your beloved father may you never forget that you are his son!" she said fervently.

He took her hand and led her to her seat, "I will try" he said, then his eye met Biener's;

"Next to my mother, to you I owe my first greeting, Herr Biener," he went on, "you have served her, served my late father, most devotedly, surely you will' serve me also? Believe me, your services shall always be valued as they deserve to be."

He embraced him lightly as he spoke, and a sensation ran through the assembly, scarcely to be concealed even in the presence of royalty.

The crowd outside the Palace had almost dispersed, when the long ceremonies of reception and presentation came at last to an end; a few still lingered, however, eager for confirmation of the vague rumours that had been in the air lately. Wardtell and old Gödel, paced up and down together; the philosophical glover also was visible. This latter seized upon the first reliable authority he could espy and did not leave him till all his

budget 'was exhausted. This soon became public property, and came to the ears of old Abraham May who had crept in hoping to hear some evil tidings of the man he hated so bitterly. The Jew now slunk away with a muttered malediction, "May I live to see him laid low yet, this arrogant man with his high-handed laws" he said as he went.

"Our friend seems to be as firmly based as a rock." said Wardtell to Gödel as they walked down together by the wall of the Capucin Convent. "Presentiments of evil are stupid things; but, somehow, I have a feeling that the sun of his prosperity has reached its zenith to-day, that it may henceforth only decline."

Ferdinand Karl was stretched listlessly on a couch in one of his private rooms that looked out on the Palace gardens. The windows were thrown open, admitting the glow and fragrance of a June evening. The Duke from time to time rose, and went to look out, then again he threw himself petulantly on the sofa tossing about the cushions. He seemed out of sorts, bored—Festivities of all kinds were to commence on the morrow, but it was deemed unseemly, after the solemn investiture of this morning that he should indulge in his usual amusements to-night.

Marello was watching his new master narrowly. He could see how heavily the hours dragged on, unused as Ferdinand was to occupy himself in any way.

"Your Highness is ill at ease—fatigued? Shall I bring my lute and sing to you?" the lackey asked.

"Spare me the infliction! thy voice croaks like an ill-greased wheel," cried the young man peevishly.

"Shall I, perhaps, relate a tale then to Altezza? the romaunt of Rudella? the Trovatore? Della torre incantata?"

"Absurd inventions—stupid stuff!" muttered Ferdinand.

"Truly then," laughed the fellow, "I can only suggest che il carcare un altro personaggio, that you should find somebody else who can excel your poor servant in music and story-telling;" and he left the room humming a soft Italian melody to himself.

"Silence!" called out Ferdinand, imperiously,

"Ma perché? why so, illustrissimo?" said the impudent varlet coming back again "What harm can my povera canzonetta do to any body?"

"I tell thee, I won't hear it-thou knowest well

enough who it brings to my remembrance!"

"Ah! but it needs no canzonetta to bring that person to your Highness's remembrance. Every thing must remind you of the Signora Lucia—A! ché belle vespere! che deliziose notte!

"Hold thy tongue, thou rascal!" cried the youth springing to his feet hastily, "I tell thee I will have no more of it!" He walked to a window and looked out into the gathering twilight. Presently he remarked carelessly without turning round.

"Hast thou seen her lately? Does she know that I am forced to give her up? How does she bear the news?"

"She knows all, she is desperata, in despair. Le donne d' Italia do not love coldly like those of more northern climes. Ha perduta il suo unico tesoro, she has lost all! piango, e non lascere di pianger fin alla morta, she weeps—she will weep till she dies."

"Weeps?—weeps for me? In truth things are little better with myself!—but what can I do to console her?" said Ferdinand without turning from the window.

"E possibile questo? Can your Highness really ask that question?"

"I have given my word of honour that I will never visit Signora Trentinara again."

Marello laughed,

"Non capisco, of course 'tis no business of mine," he said, "but it seems to me, Altezza should be master in his own court. Who is it who dares to dictate to him? But illustrissimo may keep his word, all the same. He does not go to see her, but why should she not come to see him?"

"What nonsense you talk! how could that come to pass? She would never think of such a thing," cried the youth, with flaming cheeks.

"Scold me—beat me—turn me away, if you will, Altezza! I hadn't the heart to refuse the poor lady! If only you could have seen the desperazione, le lagrime della bellissima Signorina! Oh yes—she will come to see you—Cospetto! open that door—She is here!"

Before Ferdinand could think or speak, a door flew open, and Lucia Trentinara, the beautiful Roman singer, rushed in. She flung herself on his neck and sobbed, the tears welling up in her great passionate black eyes, "Fernando! Ah perfido!—ingrato! Lascia mi almen morir al tuo cuore *?"

Her melting eyes, her sweet lips, those lovely rounded arms had lost none of their charm for the infatuated youth—How could he but console her? All resolutions fell dead; all promises were forgotten. The voice of his conscience was growing fainter and fainter as some good angel's might have been, borne rapidly away over the ocean while he remained stranded upon the siren's rock.

^{* &}quot;Ferdinand! perfidious, ungrateful one -let me die upon thy heart!"

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CHAPTER XII.

MOTHER AND SON.

DETACHMENT of the Lichtenstein regiment was on guard at the River Gate. Soldiers were sitting on the hard benches surrounding the guardroom over the archway, and lounging by its windows. Below, the sentries paced to and fro with measured tread, or stared vacantly out of their boxes. One ill-looking fellow was stretched on the ground in a quiet corner, his braces unbuckled, his hands clasped beneath his bushy red head, an image of laziness. A hungry looking, youth, regarding him with an envious eye, remarked "Mind the sergeant doesn't catch thee there, Kürzinger, dark as thy lair is. Thou wilt soon be in bad trim for marching and campaigning, if thou indulgest long in such comfortable ways. It seems we are to have it hot and heavy too, before long. 'The Swedes have got to the Inn, they're encamped before Kufstein, they sav."

"I can tell thee it's mighty little marching, or sentry work, or any such nonsense, I'd be troubled with, if I had my way," replied the soldier, yawning aloud.

His comrade only laughed, "I believe thee—but, unless thou should'st happen upon the breeding penny,* how is it to be shirked?" he remarked.

^{*} A coin supposed to increase by magic.

"Why, blockhead! can't a man look out for some comfortable widow or spinster, who's tired of her own

company and has enough to keep two snugly?"

"Aha! thou would'st marry? But surely not that hideous old crone who keeps the tavern in the Hof Gasse, that wine shop, where thou wert used to crack a bottle so often that at last the sergeant threatened the lash ?--"

"He might happen to get the worst of it, if he tried any such tricks with me. Old? hideous? Why that's all a matter of taste. If I fancy her, that's enough. She lived up at the Büchsenhaus for six years, and I'm much deceived, if she didn't feather her nest pretty well in all that time. If she's old, why I shall get rid of her all the sooner. If she sets up her back and scratches, I know a way to make her either give in or run away. Stay!" he suddenly cried, sitting up. "who's that just gone under the gateway?"

"That peasant with a long basket on his back?"

"I would have sworn it was somebody I knew, if it had'nt been for the brown hair and beard. I declare. if I wasn't so comfortable here, I would follow that fellow.—Tell you what, though! If you will go after him and keep him in sight till he is earthed somewhere, you shall have two thalers of the information moneyprovided I get any. Now be off, come back when you find out anything, and report to me."

The young fellow could not withstand the bribe. He looked out, he saw the man Kürzinger had noticed, leaning over the parapet of the bridge, and seeming to inhale with delight the fresh autumnal air, brought down by the current of the rapid river. He was gazing round with an air of interest and recognition, though he looked like a fruit merchant from Meran.

When he went on presently, up the steep road

leading to St. Nicolo, the soldier followed him. At last he saw him stop at the gate of the Büchsenhaus and ring the bell; drawing a little closer, he could hear him say to the servant who answered it—

"I hear that your master is a judge of fine fruit; I have brought some grapes here to shew him—Indeed I may say I am a sort of old acquaintance of his Excellency's, too. He might chance to know me again, if I could have speech of him."

The servant admitted him, and the soldier departed with this news for his comrade.

The Chancellor sat at his writing table close by the open window, immersed in business, as usual. Elizabeth was near him, busied with some needlework. A fine little boy, who was sitting on a stool beside her playing with his toys, ran to peep into the basket which the stranger had unbuckled and placed on the floor on coming into the room. The man saluted the Chancellor respectfully. Biener looked at him keenly but failed to recognise him.

"I think, friend, you extemporised an acquaintanceship to gain admittance—So it appears to me" he said smilingly.

The man glanced round the room. When he was assured that no one was present, save Biener, his wife, and the child, he drew himself up and saluted military fashion; then coming closer he said, "Does your Excellency indeed not know me? Well, it is a good thing for me if it is so; it shows that the walnut juice has done more for me than I had supposed. I hope the soldiers have forgotten me too; yet I fancied one of them was dogging me as I came up the hill, in spite of my brown skin and beard."

"I know that voice surely! Why—can it be you, Hartmann? How is it you have ventured to come

back here?" cried the Chancellor, examining the man more closely.

"Excellency, I couldn't bear it any longer; you can guess why—I think my heart would have broken outright. I have not heard one word, in all these long years, of the people I was just bound to, as if with steel chains."

"This is a very risky thing to have done, though; what if you are recognised?"

"Oh no, I cannot be found out. I will only just stay long enough to see what has become of her; then I will go away again and try, if I can at all, to live far from these dear old hills that I love with all my heart. I didn't even dare to look towards Schildhofer's house as I came by. The old man, in his delusion, might have given me up to the soldiers. It is quite likely."

"No, no; you are too hard on the grey-beard. I cannot promise you that you are forgiven, for as he connects you with all the heartbreak he has had, he can't help feeling angry still; but as years have gone by, he has followed the dictates of his warm old heart and has taken Afra back to his fatherly arms again."

"God bless him for that!—I thank your Excellency for telling me—I must see her, I must speak to her—just once more. The stone that seemed to be crushing my heart is rolled away now!"

Franz fought hard with his emotion, at last, after wiping his brow, he managed to say in a different tone, "I've something to tell your Excellency too. I have ferretted out that whole business at last for you!"

"What business, my friend?"

"Why, I can now prove that your Excellency was quite right in those suspicions you once confessed to; that time I brought you the paper out of Bavaria—the paper about the capitulation of Breisach—"

"Is it possible?" cried the Chancellor, springing to his feet in great excitement, "let me hear everything!"

"You remember you sent me back across the frontier? Well, for some time I didn't know what to turn my hand to, to keep the wolf from the door. In our own poor country there, everything was lying waste and desolate, so presently I took to the hills again and trudged on till I came to the shores of the Bodensee. At Tubingen, I got work to do, rather a falling off from my own trade, to be sure; but in those parts nobody cares for books. A certain corn factor called Obser, reputed to be the richest man in Wurtemberg, had need of a man to take charge of a wagon and team and go round the country collecting grain; so, finding that I had learnt to groom and drive a horse when I was in the Dragoons, he engaged me for the job.

"It seemed that my employer had made most of his money by army contracts, about the time of the siege. He was fond of spinning yarns about himself, and at first I heeded them but little. One evening however, he had been drinking rather more freely than usual, and he asked me if I had ever chanced to come across a brother-in-law of his, in my travels,—and no less a man was this same brother-in-law, than Chancellor Vollmar, my old Breisach acquaintance!"

"Go on! go on!" cried Biener. Hartmann proceeded, "You may be sure, I listened then with all my ears! so it all came out by degrees. Vollmar, it appears, is a Wurtemberger from Neusslingen, I think—He began the world as a Protestant Professor in one of the Universities at Freyburg I believe, and he has brothers and cousins all over the district: he changed his religion that he might get into the imperial service; and, being now a Catholic, has worked his way up till he has got to be the Chancellor of Upper Austria.

"When it came to provisioning of the fortress, it was handy for him, you see, to give contracts to his own kith and kin, this Obser and others. These fellows bought up everything they could lay their hands on from the peasants, and didn't leave them an ear of corn before all was over; then of course they had things all their own way.

"The French got wind of this, and sent secretly to say that if they could ensure getting hold of supplies they would give double price for everything. But this might have been a risky business—it might even have · cost Obser and Co. their necks—if it hadn't been cunningly devised. The provisions were all packed on rafts and sent off up the Rhine to Breisach, as it might appear; wonderful to relate though, just as these heavy rafts were passing a certain island in the river, they happened to go aground on it. Of course the few men in charge were able to make but slight resistance, when a strong body of French attacked them from the further bank of the Rhine. The supplies were all carried off!—Just at that time the siege operations were completed, all communications cut off. It was precisely to this failure of the provisions we had counted on, that the capitulation was ultimately due."!

"But proof!—proof of all this is what we must have!" «cried Biener, striding up and down the room with rapid steps: "How are we to prove that Vollmar was in collusion with these people? that he knew of this?"

"The very sparrows on the house tops twitter of it. You need only ask any one of the people yonder, they are all quite ready and able to give you full particulars; if they thought it was likely to be of any use, at least they would relate it all gladly, though no one has cared to be the first to bell the cat so far. I have a list of men from whom we can get particulars; see here, Excellency,

Muschel, the brewer at Coppingen, heads it. He actually saw them receiving the French money; he actually saw Vollmar getting his share of the spoil!"

Biener ran his eye over the paper, then held out his hand to Hartmann.

"You have indeed brought me most valuable information" he cried "and at the very moment when it is most needed too. How can I reward you?"

"Never mind about any reward at all, Excellency! I am glad if I can help you to blow up this hornet's nest. Well!—I will go now. It may look suspicious, if the fruit-seller has too long an audience of the State Chancellor! I will return in two days time, Excellency, and see what further directions you may have for me then. I will knock at old Schildhofer's door as I pass; it may be that he will let me in now. I must just go away then, I suppose, and try to forget what fine castles I ibuilt here, once upon a time; how I thought I wasgoing to print books in Innsbruck—and all the rest of it!"

"Try to be resigned," said the Chancellor, as Hartmann shouldered his heavy basket and prepared to go; "you are not singular in your troubles. Most dreams of earthly happiness fade and die. Disappointment is the lot of all of us here below."

Biener had often and bitterly reproached himself for his want of promptitude in acting on that proof of Vollmar's perfidy, which he had obtained so strangely. He asked himself over and over again, what infatuation it could have been that had made him pause before bringing the guilty to justice. Nay, had he not even allowed Vollmar to depart on an important mission? Had his conscience then been asleep? Since he had lost that packet, he had felt like a man challenged to mortal combat, while deprived of his sword; and now

the same honest fellow who had before helped him, once more offered to furnish yet more conclusive evidence, than at that time, of Vollmar's guilt. Was kind fate about to atone to him for his negligence by arming him again?

He was suddenly disturbed in these reflections by a disturbance under his window, men's voices, loud in dispute, mingled with the clash of swords. He looked down, and there he saw Hartmann in the midst of soldiers and constables, about to be led off, it seemed, to prison. Old Seiler, who was in command of the party, was shouting roughly.

"Bind the fellow! then he can't possibly escape us—"
The Chancellor called out of the window, for his servants stood by, stupefied by this strange sight,

"What is the meaning of this? what are you doing with that man?"

"He is a heretic, a vagabond, a disguised malefactor, your Excellency; he has no business to be at large at all. We are taking him to the Krauterthurm."

"Loose those bonds instantly!" cried the Chancellor, he will make no attempt to escape, if you have any real charge to bring against him you can lodge it; meantime, set him at liberty!"

"It can't be done, Excellency! Once set him at liberty and the bird will fly, we may never set eyes on him again. Now we have caught him we must hold him fast!"

"But I tell you I know the man—I will be answerable for him—I will go bail for his appearance whenever he may be required."

"But who is to answer for me?" grumbled Seiler, in a very different tone to his usual obsequious one.

"I will take all the responsibility on myself" said. Biener.

"Responsibility? aye! there'll be more of that than you'll care for, perhaps!" muttered the fellow; but so low that only those standing close to him could hear the words.

"Must I repeat it once more? release that man!"

cried Biener indignantly.

"As you insist upon it then—but I take all here present to witness that this thing is done entirely upon your Excellency's own responsibility. You make yourself solely accountable for him. Set him at liberty then, my men."

"And who's to be accountable for my information money, I should like to know? I tracked him, if I don't give him up now, I'll be cheated of my pay!" said Kurzinger.

"Are you, a soldier, not ashamed to take money for such an action?" said Biener scornfully "Well then, you may come to me for it this evening."

He drew back from the open window; Hartmann could only pull off his hat and look up most gratefully— The party of constables then went off grumbling and gesticulating.

Schildhofer, hearing some strange disturbance going on, had come to the Büchsenhaus to see what it meant. He now went up to Hartmann and stretched out his hand, without uttering a word. The soldier shook it warmly, but for a time neither of them could speak. They then went down the road together. When they came to the cottage, the old man made a sign to Franz to enter, and treading softly they went into the little ground floor room.

Afra was sitting there at her spinning wheel, letting the thread pass slowly through her fingers, twisting it mechanically. Her fixed and vacant gaze shewed how far away were mind and thoughts from all that was present. Her dress and hair were in a sad disorder, that confirmed the dreadful suspicion that had struck the poor young fellow to the heart, when he saw her strange look. A gentle, harmless madness had clouded the mind of this unfortunate girl.

A few days later, the Chancellor betook himself to the Palace, as had been his wont formerly, to lay many important affairs of state before the Duke. Twice already had he made this attempt fruitlessly. If pleasure called him in a different direction, Ferdinand found it impossible to give his mind to serious matters. The Chancellor's chance of engaging him in any rational business seemed as hopeless as ever to-day. The courtyard was so thronged with men and beasts that it was only to be traversed at peril of life and limb.

Horses, caparisoned for the chase and scarcely to be restrained by their grooms, champed the bit and shook their embossed bridles. Dogs yelped and strained in the leash, huntsmen, jägers, falconers, jostled each other; men carrying spears, guns, lassoes, ran to and fro, trumpets and drums sounded a martial strain. It was a tumultuous scene, and Biener was glad to escape up the stair leading to the state apartments, and leave it all behind him.

A small man gorgeously arrayed in a hunting dress of green velvet embroidered with gold, had almost run against the Chancellor as he mounted the stairs. He stopped to apologise, presenting to Biener's eye a dark visage lighted by a pair of brilliant eyes; though old and wrinkled there was much life and humour in his smile as he exclaimed "Wonders will never cease! Has our grave and reverend Chancellor been actually beguiled into joining in our sports for once? Is your Excellency going to hunt to-day?"

"Oh no, Signor Luniati, his Highness knows that I

have scant leisure for field sports, besides I am, as you say, a trifle old and grave now. I am glad our young Duke and his Italian friends take so kindly to our national sport, however; chamois hunting is capital exercise; it tries a man's metal, too. In my younger days I have had many an adventure on the Grate, the Schrofen, the Kare, in pursuit of the gemsbocks."

"Grate? Scro—What hard names for a poor southern tongue to pronounce! But you don't imagine, surely, that we are such fools as to risk our necks by climbing your frightful peaks ourselves? We should scarcely think a little goat worth so much peril and fatigue as that would cost us, I fancy."

"Excuse me," said Biener smiling "I did indeed suppose that was your intention; then how is it? Have you been able to persuade the shy creatures to come down to you to be shot? Formerly they were only to be found on the very highest summits."

"Ah! Chancellor, that is like your wit! Why the fact is our hunting is now reduced to a very simple art. It can be done with scarcely any fatigue, I assure you. We send up peasants to the lairs of these gemsbocks; they spread themselves over the mountains, getting up above the game, then, gathering in from all sides, they drive the creatures before them till they get to that precipice—what do you call it? the name of one of your Counts or Emperors—?"

"The Martinswand, I presume?"

"Yes!—Well—we hunters encamp ourselves in a meadow just under that cliff, our guns loaded all ready. When the goats are driven on to the edge of the precipice they find there's nothing for it but to spring over; as they do this, we pick them off, as handily aspossible, eating our luncheon meantime. Oh 'tis rare good sport, I assure you."

"It is most obliging of the gemsen to allow themselves to be shot for your diversion, Marquis" laughed Biener.

"You laugh scornfully, Excellency; but there is no sport that both our young Duke and his wife take more delight in than this, I can tell you."

Marello now elbowed his way through the crowded room, dressed magnificently and looking important,

"I have been looking everywhere for you, Marchese Luniati," he cried eagerly "His Highness desires your attendance instantly."

The obliging old gentleman followed Marello, without a word, leaving Biener to glance at his surroundings.

There was a full muster of courtiers and officials, arrayed in gorgeous hunting costumes of green and gold; eyes sparkled, light words and lighter laughter flew from lip to lip, beauties looked coy, men devoted. Everywhere the soft Southern tongue prevailed. It needed, indeed, some seeking to find one sober German face in all this throng. Herr von Vols seemed to be the only compatriot Biener could turn to. "Amidst all this novel assembly an old official feels himself a stranger" he said "you, Councillor, are doubtless better acquainted than I with most of these ladies and gentlemen?"

The Freiherr pointed out the lady in waiting to the young Duchess, Ferdinand's bride, a Tuscan Princess, also Count Ferrari just newly appointed keeper of the privy purse, and others.

"A brilliant Court, but may I ask what Court it is supposed to be?" asked Biener.

"I fail to comprehend your Excellency?"

"It is generally supposed that ours is a German Court, that of an Austrian Arch-Duke, but surely we must have been mistaken—we are in the dominions, rather, of an Italian Duca?"

The Freiherr shrugged his shoulders in silent deprecation of so bold a speech.

"We Germans must soon begin to think how we can change our old Teutonic cognomens so as to be in the fashion" proceeded Biener. "Shall I call myself Apiari, or Apiano? which will sound the softest?" To the great relief of Herr von Vols a movement now took place which separated him from the Chancellor; a talk ecclesiastic came out of the Duke's private apartments and walked slowly down the room, bowing and smiling on all sides in response to the salutations he received. Not one hat had been raised to Biener; as Father Gravenegger passed, all heads were bent, every tongue was silent. The Jesuit had been appointed confessor to Ferdinand as well as to the Duchess-Claudia. When his eye fell on Biener, standing aloof and unnoticed, he cried with well simulated concern;

"How is this; your Excellency waiting; not yet, perhaps, announced? Permit me to inform his Highness that you are attending him."

Before Biener could protest he had retraced his steps and Marello was flinging open the doors, re-admitting him to the private apartments. Presently the lackey appeared again to announce his Highness's profound regret that he was debarred by pressing business from receiving the Chancellor just then. His Highness was about to ride out. Marello went on to say,

"If there is anything of urgent importance to communicate, Count Ferrari will be pleased to receive his-Excellency's statement."

"I? how intolerable," cried Ferrari, "to be kept here by some tedious business when I was counting on such a good day's sport." Turning to a lady into whose willing ear he had been whispering, he added, "and what. is most vexatious in the matter, I may lose my place by your side too!"

"But why can't business wait? it can't matter much," she replied, with a captivating smile,

"I regret to say this business cannot wait," said the Chancellor, very decidedly. The fair one turned pouting away, the Count twirled his long moustache. "Good Heavens!" he cried, "if his Highness could imagine how intolerably these state affairs of his bore me, he would scarcely inflict them upon me as he does."

Biener's wrath had been waxing hotter and hotter with each word that was uttered by the pair. It burst forth at last;

"I feel sorry, indeed, for you" he said scornfully, "for however inconvenient it is to me to be forced to use a speaking tube in order to attain to the Duke's ear, it is worse for the passive medium I have to use than it is for me. The office is humiliating, I confess."

Ferrari had the greatest difficulty in suppressing a furious retort, but he did force himself to smile, and to remark smoothly "How trenchant! how ingenious! yet Excellency, let me entreat you to regard the poor medium, you so scorn, with compassion. Accept a substitute, since it does not seem to signify to you by what means your information reaches his Highness's ear."

"It certainly cannot matter to me," said Biener. Gravenegger at this moment came out from the private apartments again; "Reverend Father, I know you will be willing to relieve me of this task?" Ferrari cried eagerly.

"Probably the Chaplain may be willing to do so, but I protest most distinctly against any such substitution," said Biener, "I have no wish that not merely an imperfect, but probably a quite erroneous, statement should be conveyed to the Duke."

The Jesuit was just at Biener's elbow as this was said. "By no means, Count Ferrari," he remarked gently. "His Highness's commands cannot be set aside in this fashion. You must receive the Chancellor's communication, at the same time I am not unwilling to support you by my presence, and lend you my counsel meanwhile. Matters may be expedited perhaps, by this means, you may the sooner escape and be restored to your friends and your sport."

"Do so by all means, then, if it is likely to abridge the time," muttered Ferrari, "Let us adjourn to a smaller room at once. I am willing to listen to all that his Excellency sees fit to impart to us, only let us lose no time about it, Abbate."

Too impatient to sit down by the table with the others, the Count stationed himself by a window commanding a view of the courtyard.

"Now I know it is the old story, Eccellenza, money, money, always money!"

"There is another subject which we must first discuss, I fear, a very serious one to grapple with, and which may renew old differences amongst us too. This war which has caused thousands to bleed for the last twenty years does at last appear to be wearing itself out. the belligerents seem to be equally exhausted by it, let us hope that each may be ready to sacrifice something in the interests of humanity. We are treating with the French at Osnaburg, with the Swedes at Münster, and now is the time to assure ourselves that we do not pay more dearly for peace than we have paid for The whole of Upper Austria, the Breisgau, Alsace, Lorraine, have been given up to our foreign allies. An attempt may be made to rob us of even more of our possessions. It is imperatively needful that our representative on the Rhenish frontier should be a man

honestly devoted to the service of our Duke, our country. A man who is above all suspicion of intriguing with the enemy, or of being tampered with by foreigners."

Ferrari made no pretence at listening. "Quite so," remarked the Jesuit, "and, as far as I can judge of him, Chancellor Vollmar, our representative at the Congress held at Hamburg formerly, is in every respect just the man you describe."

"There is a representative of the Tyrol on that frontier then?" said Ferrari, catching the last word, "then what need for all this long statement? Can't he arrange matters?"

"There is strong presumption for the suspicion that Chancellor Vollmar is not the man to serve our interests with zeal and integrity," said Biener reluctantly, "it may prove to be very injudicious to leave matters of serious import in such unworthy, such despicable, hands at the present juncture."

"But surely this is too grave a matter to be decided now?" said Ferrari "His Highness will have to go into the question personally. It can't signify whether the discussion takes place to-day or to-morrow."

"I must add," said Gravenegger, "that so grave a charge, brought against a man, hitherto deemed above all suspicion, will need to be substantiated by ascertained facts, positive proofs before it can be entertained."

"Proofs exist," said Biener, looking steadily into the Jesuit's eyes, "the facts are known to others as well as to myself; when the time has come they will be forthcoming—You think so too, you agree with me, Reverend Father?"

"I do not profess to understand what your Excellency means," said the Jesuit carelessly, "had proof existed that such a charge as this could be substantiated, it ought long ago to have been brought to light. How culpable

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any man would be who possessed such proof yet kept it concealed! Why, it would be tantamount to condoning the matter, to possess such knowledge yet not make use of it. The man who acted so might be deemed almost an accomplice in the treason."

The priest's words hit Biener very hard; how, indeed, could he hold himself guiltless? He cast one indignant glance at his foe, it was returned with interest—After a pause he said, "Count Ferrari is right, this matter must stand over for discussion with the Duke."

"By all means! Has *Eccellenza* any other matter of urgent importance to impart to us?"

"I regret to say, I have. A matter that wears a threatening aspect too. Moved by the great sufferings of his subjects, Maximilian of Bavaria recently concluded an armistice with the foe. He finds that advantage has been taken of this concession, by France and Sweden, that their demands are too exorbitant to be met peaceably, so he has ended this armistice. As a consequence, Wrangel is once more ravaging Bavaria, wasting the whole land with fire and sword.

"He is rapidly approaching our frontier, coming on by forced marches; all means must instantly be used to fortify and garrison our fortresses on the Inn. Kufstein is threatened at this very moment, reinforcements called for."

"Why are we to conclude that the Swedes will attack our frontier castles unprovoked? Surely there is some. false alarm—we shall be incurring immense expense, I cannot see that the emergency warrants it."

"The way to secure peace is to be well prepared for war. It would be a culpable want of patriotism to neglect our defences—So far, indeed, we have been able to escape a general armament, but much is needed before we can consider ourselves in a state of defence. The

militia must be called out, they will need arms, ammunition, provisioning."

The Count shrugged his shoulders,—"In God's name then, why not do all this, if the money for it is forthcoming," he said.

"There may be a surplus left still from our last levy of taxes—the arrears came in then from all the Italian provinces—the budget must be looked to. Besides these subsidies, needed for our national defences, our industries should be supported. Our silk trade languishes, our mines, our metal workers, are idle; the manufactories on the Adige are much in want of subsidies. How I begrudge every penny that has to be squandered on this most lamentable war, knowing how it robs our poor folk and their industries!"

Count Ferrari turned from the window laughing aloud, "Eccellenza must be jesting" he said, "There is no money left in the privy purse. It is simply empty. Do the peasants think they are to keep warm in their nests, enjoying themselves, eating and drinking, and making merry, yet contributing nothing to the support of their Duke and his household? Did you really suppose that pitiful little sum, raised from them lately, was likely to last over three months? What do you propose to do?"

"That is bad—evil news indeed for every patriotic soul—And yet I feared it might be coming to this—I have in some measure even provided for it. Extra powers are granted to us in times of emergency. When war is imminent, an extraordinary levy can be made. A meal penny on every sack brought to the mill, a drink penny on every cask of wine, may be collected. We are even empowered to demand of our richer citizens any sums needed to supply the deficit—"

"Capital! and perfectly lucid too," cried Ferrari, "let me have the necessary papers at once, that the Ex-

mandate serenissimo may be sent out. How much do you calculate this impost will produce?"

"About two hundred thousand thalers for the six

months, presumably."

"Admirable! that will see us well through our embarrassments, without the aid of our condescending friend Abraham May. He is shamefully extortionate, I must confess. Let this matter be seen to at once, Mr. Chancellor."

"I do not think we quite understand each other, Mr. Keeper of the Privy Purse," said Biener, coldly, "Do you comprehend that any sum thus raised can only be utilized for national purposes?"

"What do you mean? The country has to provide in the first instance and above all for its sovereign's needs. It is his affair to spend the money, theirs to find it for him. You have only to see that we are supplied, we will look to the laying out of the money, you may be very sure of that!"

"In that case," said Biener, rising abruptly, "I will draw up no documents, I will levy no tax. I will not infringe by a hair's breadth on the sacred rights of the Tyrolese people. Considering all the centuries during which they have served their Counts loyally, faithfully, they have deserved something better of them than that their palladium should be thus trodden ruthlessly under foot. No word or action of mine shall sanction the plundering of the peasantry for the keeping up of this shameful, reckless expenditure."

"But consider, your Excellency—" Gravenegger was beginning, in a soothing tone—Biener's indignation was now beyond all control,

"Silence, Mr. Chaplain," he cried, "you have no voice in this matter. Our good, careless, young Duke is shamefully misled, you are one of the accomplices in his

misleading. You are silent and content to see it go on because you get your share of the golden rain that falls equally on all around Ferdinand."

The Jesuit's eyes flashed with rage; he was going to retort violently, when Ferrari stepped before him, drawing his sword and shouting, "How do you dare to say his Highness's commands are not to be paramount? Is it for you to dictate to the Duke—?"

"I have no wish to do so. I only declare to you solemnly, that no tax shall be levied for the purpose you propose. I will lay the matter before his Highness himself, and tell him how you would misappropriate public funds... I will hear from his own lips what his wishes are—"

"You may do so now," said Ferdinand, entering the room at that moment, dressed for hunting. "Well, Chancellor? what has happened to put you in a bad humour? Indeed you are seldom otherwise now!"

Biener drew himself up with simple dignity as he stood before the youth.

"Your Highness," he said, "that is a hard word to say. I fear, not only that I am personally unwelcome, but that all the weightier affairs of the kingdom are so,—nay, are even repugnant to you."

"Oh yes—but is there no escape from them?" cried Ferdinand, "Is it my fault that you have always something unpleasant to tell me of? Is it a sin, if I wish to enjoy a few hours sport, free from these cursed State affairs? For this once, I will hear you, however."

The Chancellor stated the case in a few pregnant sentences. Concluding he said "And this is the question at issue; I bargain that, if an extra tax is levied, the money goes to the support of our national industries and to our equipment for war. Count Ferrari insists that, in the first place, we provide him with means for this reckless expenditure, these useless amusements."

"Useless? do you dare to call my personal amusements useless? you do not mince matters!"

"It is neither my duty, nor my intention, to do so!" said Biener dryly, "I would not deprive your Highness of reasonable pleasures; but I would limit them. instance, would you deprive your honest peasantry of their morsel of bread, their drop of wine, that you might indulge in lavish expenditure? Would you take the citizen's last piece of silver—his furniture? Could your Highness be happy at such a price as that? And yet your people of the Tyrol are loyal and true. do believe them capable of depriving themselves of their last farthing for a Prince who has his country's good at heart. Those excellent people, however in their poor mountain hovels, like to feel that their Prince loves and values them. Your Highness, can you lay your hand on your heart this minute and declare to yourself that so far, you have governed your subjects in a manner that tends to give them this confidence in their Prince?"

"Your Highness," cried Ferrari "what manner of man is this, who dares to speak to you thus?"

"Let the Chancellor proceed," said Ferdinand carelessly.

"The peasant stands amazed to see the hundreds of costly steeds in the royal stables—the lions and other strange animals kept for show on the ramparts. He sees with dismay, splendid new theatres and riding schools being erected, and puzzles his poor brain to know how money can be had for all this, while none is forthcoming for manufactures—vine growing, cattle breeding, which all lie in abeyance for lack of government support. Your fortresses are insufficiently garrisoned and provisioned, the arsenal is empty. If one of your peasants were to present himself, and ask you how all this can be, what reply could your Highness make to him?"

"To prison—to the block with him!" cried Ferrari,

beside himself with fury "this audacious fellow deserves no better answer than that—"

The Duke signed to him to be silent, "Say on," he said to Biener, "for this once, I will hear you to the end."

"I thank your Highness for that favour—then I will unburden my mind of much that has weighed upon it. The needful comes before the useful, the useful before the agreeable in all well-ordered households, be it that of Prince or peasant. Before you pay Italian singers, players, mountebanks, see that your own good subjects have the means of subsistence. Before giving a chalice filled with gold pieces to the shrine of St. Borromeo, see that your country is armed against her foes."

Ferdinand flung himself moodily into a chair.

"A pleasant life Princes would lead, if they followed your precepts!" he cried petulantly.

"Is pleasure the end and aim of life? Is self-indulgence the first duty of a Sovereign, then? No, my Prince! it is the fulfilment of duty alone that makes life worth living. He who lives for ease only, may sink down to perdition on his bed of roses—"

"The old story, you see a second Nero in me!" said Ferdinand bitterly.

"I do not! yet, would to God, I might be a second Seneca to your Highness—Hear me, then! if, only, you could curb this boundless extravagance you would be happy, beloved, revered by your subjects." Here Ferdinand made a sign for the Chancellor to desist but Biener went on with growing warmth, "It is impossible that the present management—if such a word can be applied to the expenditure at Court,—can last. You are not aware of the complications it is bringing about. Bankruptcy is inevitable, if this drain upon the treasury proceeds. All the national resources will soon be

exhausted. You will be the ruler of a nation of beggars."

"Enough! I will hear no more—" cried the Duke springing up—"I am sick of being hectored over as if I were a schoolboy! You shall have my ultimatum ere long." He hurried away, as he spoke, to join the crowd of flatterers waiting for him. Horns sounded, kettledrums boomed, and the brilliant calvacade trooped out of the courtyard.

Biener breathed heavily two or three times, the flush of indignation was on his brow "By heaven, this is too much!" he cried, "the cup overflows—yet, patience! patience!"

As he came out into the ante-room, an attendant said a few words in a low voice to him.

"What, this also?" he said, and smiled grimly. The bulky form of Schmaus was seen coming from the Duke's apartments. Biener went up to him, "Excuse me, may I detain you a moment, President?" he said. "You, as his Highness's chief administrator of justice, may recollect that I made an appeal lately on behalf of a poor young fellow, a printer by trade?"

"Oh yes, I remember quite well," said Schmaus, a little awkwardly, "he had been taken prisoner some years ago with those heretics in the Zillerthal and banished the country."

"Yes—I furnished you with the facts and the extenuating circumstances also. It seemed to me a case peculiarly suited for clemency. You promised me your aid, and now I hear that the poor fellow, after delivering himself up freely to justice, has been scourged, condemned to penal servitude, and is actually now working out his sentence."

"I am quite amazed to hear that, can it be really possible?" said Schmaus, more and more confusedly, "What it is to be so overwhelmed with work! you know

yourself how things escape one under press of business such as mine. I regret it extremely, but I have to confess to its having entirely slipped my memory."

"So.? slipped your memory?" laughed Biener, sardonically, "but why this great haste to carry out the sentence? why was he debarred all chance of an appeal to the clemency of the Duke? especially too, as I had become surety for the unfortunate young man?"

"Indeed, I can scarcely comprehend it myself," stammered Schmaus "But why not try to get his sentence commuted? We might manage it, perhaps."

"And the brand of the scourge,—can you get him

cleansed from that, think you?"

"Your Excellency takes this matter too much to heart!" said Gravennegger's smooth voice, close to them, "I chance to know all about the man; I can assure you he is a dangerous malignant, who quite deserves the punishment he has got."

"Now I know why the case has been so hurriedly decided," said Biener. "This malignant had once thought of setting up a second printing press in the Tyrol, that would have let in too much light to suit

your society, which loves darkness, Father!"

"I can make allowance for your insinuations, but I can scarcely see why your Excellency need be so interested in an insignificant person of this kind. His excuse for coming back was, that he might see his sweetheart; yet it appears his first visit was paid to you; you went bail for him, Chancellor—"

"So your spies have discovered that? you are well served, indeed! When I have need of secret service, I shall know to whom to apply:" said Biener, scornfully.

"Your Excellency is so hasty," said Schmaus, trying to keep the peace between them, "I am sure if I could find any means of obliging you in the matter—"

"Don't trouble yourself to oblige me, and don't distress yourself because of my hastiness. You can't help having a bad memory and I do not blame you for it. Doubtless you have also forgotten that you once said to me 'I shall be a villain, if I ever forget this to thee.'"

Schmaus could find no words to reply. Biener turned to the priest, "Farewell, Father," he said "I do begin to believe in your prophecies at last. What you foretold seems imminent now. I would most gladly leave the field to you, but I am bound—bound by a solemn promise. A serious misfortune to me, is it not? How would it be if you were to assist me in the matter? You have taken me under you sacerdotal wing once already to-day; if you will extend your favour and contrive to set me entirely at liberty, I will gladly bestow a thousand thalers on any one of your charities that you may name."

As he spoke, Chancellor Vollmar entered the room, wearing his chain of office and in Court dress.

"Ah, Chancellor!" said Biener "Do you hail from Münster, or from your native Wurtemburg? How are all your good kinsfolk there? Your worthy brother-in-law, Herr Obser the cornfactor, and others—How do they prosper? I hope to hear many interesting facts about the good people in those parts soon—Now, my good Father, may I entreat you to reflect seriously on what I have suggested. You will not have far to seek for a successor to my office. Here is the very man, ready to your hand."

As he left them, the friends looked rather blankly at each other "Such a very eccentric greeting almost takes one's breath away," said Vollmar "What are we to understand by it? I only came to pay my respects to your reverence—"

"Impossible to tell," said Gravenegger, taking the

hand offered and motioning to Vollmar to come with him into the private apartments, "Herr Biener appears to delight in mysterious utterances. A rocket though it may explode with a great deal of sound and fury, is generally lost in the obscurity of night, and seldom injures anyone, however."

Vollmar looked inquiringly at him "It seems to me, things have changed their aspect somewhat since my last visit to Innsbruck" he said.

"Some changes that might have taken place have not come about; you remain in office" said the priest, and he smiled significantly.

"I don't feel safe, this relentless hatred of Biener's makes me doubtful sometimes—"

"He does not love you, certainly; yet his is not a dangerous nature to cope with. He is perfectly open and sincere in his hatreds. Have you any suspicion why he hates you?"—Vollmar saw that the Jesuit eyed him keenly.

"No," he said, "he is quite an enigma to me."

"Then I can enlighten you a little, perhaps, and so do you a good turn. From many circumstances, I am led to believe that Biener considers it dangerous to the welfare of the empire that you should retain the office of Chancellor of Upper Austria. Pardon me the remark, he doubts your fidelity to the house of Austria—to the interests of the Tyrol."

"The audacious fellow! He shall answer to me for that suspicion—He shall apologise and eat his words— Let him prove his calumnies or else clear my honour!"

Gravenegger had not taken his eyes from Vollmar's face, for one moment, "You will do what seems to you most prudent," he remarked, "Rumour is apt to err, but I have understood that Biener has positive proofs—yet" he went on, not seeming to observe that Vollmar

turned pale and his lips quivered in spite of all his efforts to appear at ease, "it may not hurt after all. Never mind him. If I choose, I can prevent his injuring you—You and I take quite a different view of the subject—I flatter myself I have some influence here, now I may tell you candidly, that it only depends upon the result of the present conversation whether I force him to eat his words or not."

"Amazing! how am I to understand-?"

"Hearken to me. You are too clever a politician not to be aware that the Italian faction is all powerful here at present. No sooner is any post of consequence vacant, than an Italian steps in and fills it. Now I and my colleagues consider this neither a suitable nor a desirable state of things. A very high office may shortly be vacated. We wish it to be filled by a German. He must be a man of a certain pliability of nature, who can steer his course through the various political factions here without coming into actual collision with any of them, not a man who makes it his business to offend every one."

"A difficult achievement, to walk between two dripping eaves and yet to keep oneself dry," said Vollmar.

"It may be difficult, but the emoluments are great. The man too is forthcoming; the man is yourself."

"I?" cried he, half pleased, half alarmed; the priest did not allow him to say more.

"You, Mr. Chancellor. You attend the Congress at Münster; when our position has been defined there, you return here to assume the rank of State Chancellor."

"That is a prospect equally dazzling and unexpected! but the most surprising part of it all is that the suggestion should come from you."

"An astute man of the world never allows himself to be surprised by anything. The *Nil admirare* of Horace is his motto; but you must hear me to the end. There are conditions annexed to this brilliant prospect. We never serve people without an adequate return."

"I am growing more and more curious-"

"It is a trifle that we require of you, after all," said Gravenegger, with a semblance of indifference, "We only bargain that you shall pledge yourself to follow certain indications given by us, that in all things you act as we may direct, and in our interests."

"No! I will never submit to become a mere machine—You pretend to exalt me, yet I am to be your tool!"

The priest smiled, he was about to speak, when a deadly pallor overspread his features—He struggled to his feet, glasses and a caraffe of water stood on a table near.

"What is it? What is the matter?" cried Vollmar, with great solicitude, hastening to him.

Gravenegger drank off a glass of water, pressing his hand to his left side. After a few moments he smiled again, "You needn't be alarmed" he said "I am used to these seizures—the blood rushes suddenly to my heart, as if it would suffocate me—but they pass off without leaving any serious effects—A tool, you say, a machine? What should hinder you from identifying your interests with those of the Society which claims you? What is free will? Why, simply the determination to do what is recognised as necessary. You serve yourself in serving us. For to-day, a mere outline may suffice, but we will take an early opportunity of discussing this matter more in detail. To-morrow I will speak to his Highness and take care that you receive your credentials for the Münster Congress."

"Your reverence takes it for granted that I agree to all

your premises—"

"Oh yes, you agree" said Gravenegger, and he surveyed him with a kind of amused contempt, "I know it, I know you; you are not the man to shut your eyes to such advantages as I present to you."

"Then I beg leave to inform you that you misjudge me! I value my independence above every advantage

that you may offer-"

"That means nothing, you will not refuse."

"I repeat it, I do refuse!"

"You cannot. No, you will declare your readiness to agree to all I propose, you will be compelled to do so!"

Vollmar drew himself up proudly. He looked at this inscrutable priest from the strength of his vigorous manhood.

"I must," he said, "and who will coerce me, then?"
"I—and with a single word, too!" He went up to him and whispered something in his ear. The effect was magical. Vollmar turned ashy white, he seemed as if struck by a thunderbolt. At last, however, he contrived to steady himself, to control his quivering face. "Now you perceive that you are absolutely in my power," continued the Jesuit imperturbably, "I could doom you to chains, to the block, to shame, to dishonour, instead of doing so, I offer you wealth and position. Do you still hesitate?"

"I hesitate no longer," replied he in a low, depressed tone. "I must submit, but I beseech you to tell me one thing, how did you find out? how much do you know?"

"I may tell you more, perhaps, at some future time. To-day I am indisposed, occupied. But shake off your gloom. It does not beseem a diplomatist to give way to depression. Let your prospective vision shew you only fame and success!"

"My prophetic soul also shews me vengeance!"

"On the man who is everyone's enemy?"

As Vollmar left him the Jesuit said to himself,

"Yes, go! I was sure of thee—Thou art not the man to withstand such arguments. Biener defied me, his fall was then pre-ordained. His is a character that may be allowed to exist within the narrow circle of home--in an anchorite's cell, perhaps I should say. When such a man casts himself into the current of public life, he must either sink, or be washed aside by the waves to lie useless like one of the boulders that fall from our mountain sides. Both men are now within my grasp—I can either control them or cast them aside, just as I will." After a pause, he continued, as if recalling some image to his mind's eye,

"Yet how grandly he stood there before me! with what courage he could face even his own probable ruin! Shall I let him escape? I know well that he remains in office by no wish of his own. Well, even so! retain it he must till, by his own deed, he brings about his fall. He is like an imprisoned eagle; he might live happily in his cage, tended and fed; but he prefers to beat his wings wildly against the bars in mere imaginary freedom!"

The late Autumn was at hand, with its long dark evenings that herald the coming of Winter, and promote increased sociability. Then friendly faces gather round the citizen's stove for a comfortable gossip, and tales of former days are told in the dusk by the peasant's hearth, while more distinguished members of society open their saloons for music, conversation and all the festivities of a refined civilization.

Duchess Anna, the youthful bride of Ferdinand Karl, was seated before her mirror one evening, occupied in

the adornment of her pleasing person for a State Concert.

The wax lights shone upon her long soft tresses, which her faithful bower-woman was braiding and about to tie up with a bright ribbon. Blue, violet, red, were each in their turn tried and discarded. As she took yet another ribbon and held it to her face, the Duchess said sadly, "No, Barbara, this suits me no better; they are all too gay," and she looked sadly into the mirror. It reflected a pale, gentle face; finely formed, but thin, and with insignificant features though lighted up by a pair of sweet expressive eyes. Her little rosy mouth was winning in its expression, but she was still an angular unformed girl, though tall and rather graceful.

Her eyes filled with tears as she added "I cannot please myself, and I am sure I shall not please any one else either!"

"Eh! my sweet lady would please any one who would only ever take time to look rightly at her," cried the faithful girl, "but if people won't look—"

"Am I not a most unhappy girl, Barbarina!" cried the poor young thing, breaking out into wild weeping and leaning her head against her attendant's arm, "He never looks at me, and if his eyes are turned away, his heart is even farther from me—But no, it is not quite as bad as that!" she said sitting upright, "I am making things blacker than they are—Now I have spoken out to him; I have prayed and besought him not to forsake me, and he has given me his promise—"

"Oh, promises! and finely he will keep them!" cried the girl.

"He will, he will! Why, am I not adorning myself for him at this very moment, Barbarina? This is the beginning of better days for me—"

"So your Highness thinks, you are too good to him"

"Yes—he is coming here himself to take me to the Concert—I am to sit by his side all the evening."

"And see that singing woman triumph over you?"

"Fie! do not say that. He would not take me there, if that woman were anything to him—now, I mean. No Barbara, I am full of hope."

"And may our good God grant it may be fulfilled, your Highness! As you stand there now, well armed you are, my Princess! If he only saw you with the same eyes all the rest of the world sees you with, he could never resist you."

"His Highness, the Grand Duke," was announced, and the folding doors flew open,

"Ah Barbarina—how frightened I; am!" whispered the poor young creature, "I am trembling so, all my strength and courage are gone——"

Ferdinand had grown by this time into a most noble looking young man. His face and figure had matured and were of quite remarkable beauty. He had soon become cold and indifferent to the young wife confided to his care. While he retained as his ideal of beauty the beautiful passionate woman who had woven her nets around him, this gentle, unobtrusive girl had but little chance of winning his love. It is true, he had given way to his mother's wishes so far as to avoid all open intercourse with the Trentinara now, but meeting at remote hunting lodges, secret visits even here, were hinted at still. This scandal had reached the ears of Anna, who at first bore her doubts and fears in silence, but at length she had made a supreme effort and had spoken openly to him of her pain. The present reconciliation was the result of her courage.

The Duke was quite surprised to see his wife look so fair; it seemed as if he beheld her for the first time. With a charming courtesy, something even of tenderness

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in his manner, he pressed her hand to his lips and said in a gentle voice,

"My dearest, you have not been waiting long, I hope?"

"You are more than punctual, my husband. The hour has not yet struck—"

"And yet I find you dressed? Never before have I seen my little Duchess look so charming—she is quite captivating!"

"Oh, Ferdinand, be good to me! you know how I yearn for kindness from you—You must not laugh at my love, or trifle with it, or you will kill me."

"But, my dear, I am quite sincere, I mean it. There are two kinds of beauty, one that blinds and fatigues the eye, another that steals upon you by degrees and then chains you for ever."

"Ferdinand! if only you could know how unspeakably happy it makes me to hear you say so—to feel you are near me."

"You will have so much of me soon, that the danger will be that you may tire of me."

"Never! never! If only I could find a spell to keep you, to amuse you, what delightful evenings we should have."

This was a dangerous suggestion. When he recalled the passionate charm of some former evenings, the contrast with those calm delights now offered him was rather perilous.

"Of whom are you thinking?" she asked anxiously,

"I? of my little wife, of course, and of its being high time for us to shew ourselves in the Concert room," said he, rising and offering her his hand; they had been seated side by side on a sofa while talking.

As they went down the wide corridors, preceded by attendants bearing lights, and followed by the ladies and

gentlemen of their court, the Duke remarked to his wife,

"You will hear a famous countryman of yours to-night, my dear, I hope the violin player may please you."

"And a famous queen of song too?" she asked a little tremulously,

"Yes, I fear you will not be quite an unprejudiced critic?"

"Oh, indeed I shall! I mean to applaud her with all my heart—I have got a garland for her, too. Now I have the one thing I cannot share with any woman upon earth, now I am so happy, for I have all my heart's desire and I fear no one."

As they entered, the horns sounded a flourish and everyone stood up. The large room literally blazed with waxlights. These again were reflected in mirrors and in the polished marble of the walls.

Three armchairs were placed in front of the orchestra for the royal party, though Duchess Claudia seldom now appeared with her children in public.

The Concert opened with a chorus from the now forgotten Oratorio of 'Soul and Body,' by Caccini. The singers were admirably trained and sang with great skill, accompanied by the organ. After this followed a madrigal, or harmonised lyric; then the Tuscan Lotti had an opportunity of displaying his wonderful proficiency on the violin; and now the great piece of the evening was about to be performed, the judgment of Solomon by Carissimi, in which Lucia would sing the soprano solos.

When the beautiful cantatrice came on the platform, a slight sensation, a murmur of admiration, ran round the whole room. She was dressed in a rich, dark red robe, which displayed her lovely arms and neck in all their perfection. She had twined amongst the shadowy tresses of her dark hair some strange foreign

flowers, brown and red in colour, and, as she bent gracefully before the audience, they were only kept from an outburst of applause by the presence of royalty.

Whilst the orchestra performed the ritornella, her piercing eyes swept the whole room, resting for a moment on Ferdinand. When she saw who sat by his side, she turned pale, and the music in her hand trembled for a moment; but she bit her lips, and soon had regained her composure. At length her bell-like voice burst forth, and its full sympathetic tones vibrated in every heart. It could not be denied that some strange magnetic power was in that voice; indeed it seemed as if every look, every gesture of that lovely woman thrilled the audience. People held their breath to hear those full notes sink and swell, those perfect cadences and roulades.

Ferdinand sat quite motionless, looking straight before him, while Anna's heart throbbed so loudly that she could scarcely hear the singer's voice; but she joined in the burst of applause that came when the first air had ended. Then, bending towards her husband, she engaged him eagerly in conversation; the young creature may have hoped to break the magic spell of that wondrous voice; she may have been impelled by some womanly impulse to prove to the Trentinara that Ferdinand was no longer her slave.

The Duke had no choice but to respond to his wife's whispered words. He felt instinctively however, that the jealous Italian was gazing at him with flashing eyes.

It was more than she had looked for, or could endure, that he should act the devoted husband beneath her very eyes. The interlude was over, the Maestro stood with raised baton looking towards her, she heeded him not. Uttering one wild despairing shriek, she flung her music at Anna's feet and rushed from the platform.

A tumult arose, scarcely to be quelled even by the Duke's presence. Through it all the Maestro tried to make himself heard, "Signora Trentinara was seized with a sudden cramp," he said, "A spasm made it quite impossible for her to proceed with her part." The Duchess with womanly intuition divined what this all meant. Turning to her husband, she said,

"Let us go at once, Ferdinand. This sudden seizure of the Signora's will end the Concert."

He looked much excited, but was obliged to lead his wife from the hall. He felt how strong the chain was that still bound him to the captivating singer. It was almost more than he could resist, this impulse to rush away in search of her now, as he walked moodily and silently down the long hall by Anna's side. When they reached the door they found it thronged with attendants and spectators, a voice was calling for a doctor anxiously. The Maestro appeared presently wringing his hands. "Fly for a doctor! he cried, "The Signora will die amongst our hands!" Marello stole up to his master, he whispered in his ear,

"Illustrissimo—she is dying! She begs for but one word, solamente un ultimo addio!"

Ferdinand turned quickly to one of the ladies in waiting,

"Marchesa," he said "I am summoned away unexpectedly, will you see her Highness to her apartments?" and he hurried down a corridor leading in the contrary direction to the green room—a useless device, for all knew how easily he could make a detour yet reach it.

The Duchess got to her room in a half fainting condition, then she sank on her couch in an agony of disappointed hope and wounded affection.

Next day Ferdinand was pacing his room, disquieted

and feverish. His pale looks showed that he had had a wakeful night, a night of revelry. Lucia's seizure had been a mixture of jealousy and pretence. She had acted her part cleverly. Her tears, her sufferings, her charms, were more than the weak youth could withstand; his better resolutions, kept to for a few brief hours, melted away; he was once more in her toils; it seemed even more hopelessly so than before. Yet conscience was even now speaking to him, self-reproach made him moody, discontented.

Presently Marello came in; the lackey was received with black looks.

"Is your Highness indisposed? might I ask what it is that grieves you?" said the fellow, in a cringing tone.

"Bad—utterly bad!" said Ferdinand, gloomily. "Would to God, that I could wipe it out of my recollection! I have done what I ought not to have done, and thou, villain, art accountable for it all!".

"Ah! come?" replied Marello with well dissembled surprise, "Non capisco questo! Is your Highness not lord and master?"

"No—I have been mad—deluded—this thing will be known to everyone."

"E poi? forgotten again in a week!"

The Duke flung himself on a couch and tossed about the cushions. After a minute he sprang up again, "How about the Duchess? what have you found out about her?" he asked rather anxiously.

"She has been ill all night, I hear. Such a running to and fro tutta la notte! at daybreak she ordered her carriage and drove out."

- "Drove out? went to early Mass, I suppose?"
 - "She went to visit the dowager Duchess."
 - "My mother! what does that portend?"
 - "Oh, what else but a weeping and wailing over your

Highness's wicked ways!" said the fellow, with a shrug of his shoulders and a derisive laugh.

"And I have to thank you for it all!" cried Ferdinand with a renewed burst of anger—"Yet not so either—I won't try to excuse myself, my own incomprehensible weakness is alone to blame—" he added presently.

Marello ran to the window, hearing some sounds in the courtyard which he could not understand. He turned to his master and cried eagerly.

"Your Highness! this is not the time for confessing to weakness; you will need all your strength soon if you mean to be master still, and to prove to them that you can be so. Duchess Claudia's litter has just been carried in. She is coming up the stairs."

"Coming here? Go down, deny me to her; think of some excuse; I cannot see her!" he cried in great excitement.

Marello made no attempt to obey, "You are in for it now," he said, "so your Highness may just as well face it boldly, it was bound to come sooner or later."

After a short pause, Ferdinand said quietly, "Very well—It will be a hard enough struggle, for though I do say I would give a great deal to undo last night's work, yet *she* shall not know it. I have done it, and I will stand by it—I won't yield one jot!"

"Her Highness, the Duchess Mother," was announced. Ferdinand hastened, with a show of affectionate solicitude, to meet and welcome her, saying, pleasantly,

"What an agreeable surprise! To what happy circumstance am I indebted for this early visit from my dear and honoured mother?"

The attendants had retired, leaving mother and son alone. Claudia looked coldly at him, she withdrew herself from his eager embrace, she said sadly,

"Thou need'st not feign a joy thou dost not feel. It

is not true that thou art glad to see me. If thou had'st much desire to be with me, thou would'st seek me more frequently—Thou must know but too well why I am here this morning."

"Indeed—I cannot guess—" he said in a hesitating tone. She interrupted him sternly, "Thine eyes are truer than thy lips—I may spare myself the pain of further explanation. Son—Ferdinand—unhappy deluded boy—what sorrow thou hast prepared for the heart of thy mother!"

"Your Highness!—I really must beg-"

"Highness? hast thou no other name for me than that? It is not the Duchess, it is thy mother, who has come to seek thee. How could'st thou have departed so utterly from all that is right and seemly? After all thy promises, thy sacred promises, too?"

"What does your Highness allude to, may I ask?"
"Thou art forsworn; after giving me thy oath to break with the Trentinara, thou hast fallen into her toils again!" Ferdinand was about to make some violent retort, but he compelled himself by a great effort to appear calm.

"And if it were so," he said, "can the heart be-constrained?"

Claudia drew herself up to the full height of her commanding stature. "It can," she said, "Boy! I, thy mother, tell thee the heart can be constrained—but, if we would conquer its wild impulses we must obey one voice only—the voice of honour. To the call of that supreme voice, thou art deaf."

"Your Highness!—such chiding cannot be endured!"

"Thou wilt submit to no control. No thought of the disgrace thou wilt bring on thyself can restrain thee. My son! we know that the world is only too indulgent to princes on this very point; for to us is sometimes

denied the dearest privilege of humanity, the right to love the object worthy of our love. But thou art far from being in that sad case. Thy young wife is a sweet angelic soul—a most loving, tender creature. She worships, adores thee. In her soft arms thou mightest find thy heaven. How can'st thou forsake her, preferring the vulgar charms of an abandoned woman to such a lovely being as thy wife? dragging thy helpless victim, too, to a spectacle, where she was doomed to see the horrible, deliberate triumph of her rival!"

"No! you go too far-That was never intended."

"Yet you did it! Of what worth is the good intention, if there is no strength to carry it through? Thy wife thinks of separating herself from thee, returning to her father, Cosimo de Medici, who may very likely avenge this outrage put upon his daughter. See into what thy passions may have led us—Oh! if only thou could'st learn that he who would govern a nation must first learn to rule himself!"

At first he had felt grieved and remorseful, but as his mother went on this transient feeling died out of his weak impressionable heart, and was succeeded by a bitter calculating spirit that suggested only pretexts for his sin.

"Your Highness forgets that you yourself are accountable for the present state of things. You declared me capable of ruling, and rule, I will! I repudiate all interference with my liberty of action. I abide by everything that I may choose to do. Your Highnesswastes words—"

"Highness! can you not once call me Mother? Well then, the Duchess shall speak now! You must go to your wife at once!"

"And why? to beg her pardon? never!" he cried with a scornful laugh.

"She will not need much of you. She loves you,

she is all goodness and consideration, but it is your place to seek for reconciliation first. If you refuse to do this, you may see her leave this city, this land, never to return."

He drew himself up, his eyes flashed angrily, his cheeks glowed,

"No! and for ever, No!" he cried "I will do nothing that is commanded in that tone! I am master here; it is my place to give commands, not to obey them!"

Claudia's eyes glowed; she stood before him

dauntlessly.

"And I your mother—I, Arch-Duchess Claudia—command you to do as I wish, and without another word too!"

"Do not excite yourself, your Highness, I can be just as determined as you."

"Then I will leave this land, I will seek aid from the Emperor, you shall be punished!"

"The Emperor! What is he to me? I am of age and lord in my own land, I trust!"

"Oh, son! oh, Ferdinand!" she cried in a burst of despair, pain now overcoming displeasure, "can this be possible? How can a son so speak to his own Mother?"

"You have only yourself to thank for it," he said coldly, "You forced me to it."

"Oh woe is me—bitter woe!" she almost wailed, "How bitterly have I been deceived in thee! could I but have guessed how false and base thou wert—how thou would'st have requited my loving counsel—trodden under foot all that I had done—"she stopped suddenly a glow of indignation overspread her countenance, "Laughing," she cried, "thou can'st laugh, then? What is it that excites thy mirth? Speak! or by the good God above us, thou shalt feel that thou art not even yet too old to feel a mother's chastening hand!"

"I smile, these reproaches are, to say the least of it, a trifle strange. It was entirely in obedience to your wish that I married, why am I to be bound by such a tie as that? No! I will have liberty to love whom I please—free choice!"—he stopped, for even he was shocked and alarmed to see the effect his words had produced. His mother, after an agonised cry of "Ferdinand!" stood as if stung by a poisonous snake, her hands stretched out, her eyes dilated, struggling for breath—He ran towards her,

"Oh Mother, what is it!" he cried.

"Out of my sight, wretch!" she cried wildly, incoherently—"Out of my sight! Thou art no longer worthy to be called my son—"

"But Mother! dear Mother—" he stammered.

"Out of my sight"—she gasped, "did'st thou wear ten crowns! Go! I know thee no more."

He became suddenly quite furious, "Very well then, I am going; and it is to please you," he cried, "but remember, it is all your own doing!"

Claudia stood for a time rooted to the spot—at length tears came to relieve her agony. Wringing her hands and then pressing them before her face, she sobbed,

"It was no horrible vision! That was my very own son! I have heard his lips utter such words!"

A slight sound startled her; she found that Gravenegger, who had access at all times to the royal apartments, was in the room. Turning towards him with a sigh, she said, "Father, you have come at an opportune time."

"I have heard all;" he said, casting down his eyes piously.

"Oh! then help me, counsel me—How am I to redeem my lost, my miserable, son?"

"Your Highness is excited, overwrought-when you

are calmer, you may see things, perhaps, in a different light."

Claudia regarded him with profound astonishment, "How? you think that is possible?" she said, "Have you not then been shocked—indignant—?"

"It may be best not to draw the reins too tightly at first. We must allow the fires of youth to burn themselves out—you know the adage 'youth has no virtues'"

"And that is all the consolation you offer me, Father?" The priest shrugged his shoulders.

"We are told that we must resign ourselves to the inevitable. Our Heavenly Father tells us to be patient—His Highness being now reigning Duke——"

She cast upon him a glance of withering scorn,

"At last you are unmasked!" she cried, "Oh, my poor son! I prayed that thou mightest be delivered from thyself, let me rather pray that thou may'st be delivered from these priestly hands, into which I myself gave thee—Leave me!" she said turning away from him, "and forget the road that leads to my house. Never more will my doors be open to you—But why, oh why, tarry here?" she added, wildly, "Let me be gone from this polluted spot—it stifles me—"

With tottering steps, she managed to reach the staircase, the unabashed ecclesiastic walking beside her and whispering "may God bless and preserve your Highness."

Then her limbs utterly failed her. Her people flew to support her and she sank to the ground, murmuring "He was right—but oh! my punishment is more than I can endure—Oh God, he was terribly right!"

Then a blessed unconsciousness stole over her, and her exhausted body was held for a time in a beneficent sleep.

CHAPTER XIII.

"No none—there is no cure, but only death."

THE joyful Vintage comes again
The purple grape-juice pours like rain
Into the press below.
Through all the jubilee, a sage
His lone way takes in blind old age,
And sings his song of woe.
"O Lord and God, Thy sickle wield
Bid me my o'er ripe harvest yield;
Thy blessed light bestow."

With Autumn's mellow, golden light,
Sweet peace descends, on pinions bright,
And blesses all below.
Jubilant shout youth and age,
But sad and lone, that blind old sage,
Still sings his song of woe.
"My bones are weary of the fight,
Oh! Lord, I pray for peace to-night;
Thy blessed light bestow!"

So sang an aged man, with bald head and bent body, to those assembled beneath the spreading trees before Tapster Sauerwein's inn at Mühlau. His voice was thin and tremulous, his hand feeble, he drew the bow unsteadily across the strings of the viola with which he accompanied his song; yet voice and instrument were alike touching, from the fervour of the one and the fine

resonant tone of the other. Both words and music were the blind man's own. The opening strain was joyous, it gave a voice to the full gladness of the harvest time, the vintage, to the joy of all the land. As the last sad refrain was repeated, the air fell into the minor key. The deep tones of the viola filled up the pauses almost as the swell of an organ might have done.

All voices were hushed, and the poor old man's song was listened to with the more pity from its contrast to the hope and joy that was felt in all the land now. The peasants were like birds sunning themselves after a long spell of rough weather, rejoicing in the unusually fruitful and prosperous season. The blessing of an abundant harvest was felt through all the districts of the Tyrol. The grapes had been plentiful and well ripened, the corn and maize crops, heavy and well garnered. The cattle had returned in excellent condition from the mountain pastures; the fragrant hay was safely stored in the brown huts of the valleys; the wood was cut and piled in stacks, ready for 'winter and rough weather;' and now to crown all, came the blessed tidings of the peace. They might fairly look forward to enjoying the fruits of their hard toil and foresight, then; food and forage would not be seized this season, to minister to the necessities of their Fatherland.

A few days since horsemen had gallopped along the valley, proclaiming by blast of trumpet that the war was at last ended, peace had been proclaimed. After thirty years of suffering and sorrow, they might rest and feel thankful. At night, bonfires blazed on every mountain top, proclaiming the glad tidings far and wide, with their fiery tongues, while guns were fired amidst shouts of rejoicing.

A great stillness generally follows a storm; when relieved of our fears we rest and let ourselves look

forward with hope. The whole Tyrolese nation seemed now to be drawing a deep breath and repeating a prayer of thanksgiving as it basked in the late sunshine. The troops, released from duty on the frontier, were to march through to-day, and crowds had poured forth, to meet and greet them, from all the towns and hamlets on their route. The detachments from Kufstein and the nearer heights of Wörgl and Schönau were expected to pass through Muhlau this evening. When old Schwarz's song had ceased, all hands were ready, hearts open, and his hat was soon heavy with solid proofs of the good peasants' compassion and liberality. Thankful for their generosity, he felt his way by the wall into the house again. One man said, looking after him,

"Poor old chap! His singing is wonderful still—It beats me to know how he sings at all, old and infirm as he is."

"Who is he? I have seen him somewhere long ago, I feel sure" said another. "Faith! that's likely enough" said the old Sixtenbauer from Pradel, who sat near, "He worked in the mines at Schwatz formerly. That was where he lost his sight, when they were trying some new way of blasting with quicksilver. He has had to get his morsel of bread as best he could ever since, by wandering up and down the country. Schildhofer at St. Nicolo one time took pity on him and housed him, but 'tis many a long day since they came to words and parted. He may have been out of the country since then, I haven't seen him for years till to-day.

"How is old Schildhofer?" said the first speaker. "How is it he is not here? he never used to fail at a gathering like this."

"I fear he has little heart for merry makings now Many a cross has he had, both at home and abroad."
"Aye? so I have heard tell, indeed. His daughter

has gone out of her mind, they say; but thou can'st tell all about it better than I can, Sixt."

"Faith! not I. 'Tis just one of those things nobody cares to talk much about. Yet, that's not his only trouble neither; Madame Claudia, I hear, is ill—sick unto death they say, and that falls heavily upon her old faithful servant."

"Who is it that doesn't lament it? Who was ever so beloved in this land as our good Duchess? But, may be, things arn't quite so bad as they're reported—why, she should just be in her prime now, able to take her ease and enjoy herself a bit, too."

"Would to God she could, my friend! But she has little left, if all we hear be true, to make her easy or happy now. She has fretted herself ill, so I hear tell, about the wild doings of the young Duke."

"How so? what's amiss with him? why, it was only to-day I saw him for the first time-He was riding back from hunting, as gallant looking a young fellow as ever my eyes beheld, and as like his late father as two peas. A merry young gentleman too he seems-I was taking a yearling calf, you must know, into Innsbruck; and when the stupid beast heard the trampling of the horses, nothing would serve him but to bolt. A nice job I had with him! and I couldn't manage, by any means, to pull off my hat, as the gentlefolks rode by; however, the Duke just laughed, as pleasant as possible, and called out 'Never mind about the hat, but I say, friend, take care that beast isn't the death of thee yet!' I can testify he's a pious God-fearing prince too, not fifty paces off was a shrine and crucifix, and he rode past it quite slowly, and pulled off his hat."

"Aye! well, for all that, both tales may be true—'Tis seldom the old folk can live on pleasantly with the young ones when once the land has been given up. The

lady Claudia may not like his spending so much money on none but the Italians, either."

"Well-Now we are to have peace, and folks will get on all right again."

"Not so sure of that—We hear of this glorious peace on all hands; but they say our Duke has had to give up everything he has in the world, except this one Duchy of the Tyrol. That's what we should call scrimping our coat! We shouldn't like to give up land we had managed to scrape together at such a great cost!"

"There are many tales going about this convention, I wonder what is the real truth of the matter?"

"Here's Doctor Wardtell, he can explain it all if he likes." The Sixtenbauer turned, as he spoke, to our old friend who was sitting at a little table close by and listening with considerable interest and amusement to the talk of the country folk. He said pleasantly

"And so I would very gladly, if I could; but 'tis a hard nut you have given me to crack. This peace seems to me like a hedgehog, take hold of it which way you will, you are pretty safe to prick your fingers. So far as it may bring prosperity to the poorer people, we must rejoice in it, but politically, for the German Empire, this Pacem Westphalicum is a calamitous one."

"Say you so? how is that, Doctor?" said the glover, who sat near.

"How? Because the terms of peace have been drawn up not by us Germans, but by the Swedes and the French, who constitute themselves our dictators. Many of her old, hereditary possessions have been wrested from our Duchy, as the price they claim, Judas-like, for helping us. They have taken care too, to create dissension between the Emperor and the Princes of Germany—innoculating, as it might be, our body corporate with a malignant humour. The foreign potentiae and influentiae

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would sooner see our national dissensions made more virulent than see them healed."

"And how is it to be about our Holy Catholic Faith?"

"It takes care of itself. The Church retains all her old privileges, while the Lutherans and other reformed sects are to enjoy equal rights and privileges. A normal year has been decreed, as it was some twenty years ago, and this is to be a guide for all future eventualities."

"What? Are the Lutherans to have leave to come in here freely?"

"Most assuredly they are!"

"Faith! I can't see how that is to work at all! I couldn't do with a Lutheran for a neighbour, for one. Just think of it—One of those heretics might buy a farm and sit himself down beside me, cheek by jowl—jostling up against me at every turn, no matter how wide a berth I tried to give him!"

"Time will show how it may work, my friend. You'll begin to think better of things soon; many a man you will have to live with peaceably in this world, whether you approve of his opinions or not."

"Faith! that is not my way of looking at it!" cried the old man warmly, "Now about belief—why a man's belief is his salvation; how can there be two different salvations side by side? There's no reason in it! No—I'll never give in to such changes as that—remember about the salt mines, and what came of giving up the good old custom there."

"What was that? let us hear about it, Sixt."

"Have you never heard tell of it, Doctor? Well! some learned folks don't trouble their heads much to be sure, about our old tales—You must know then that in the old times, maybe two hundred years ago—aye, more than that—the mines in the Lower Innthal here were so rich—so rich—the silver just lay shining in the sun

wherever you struck a blow into the earth with your pickaxe, and in those days the miners were good pious souls, modest and simple, and they had just an old fashioned wooden bell that rang when they had to begin work or to leave off. However, they went on finding more and more of the precious metal, till at last the demon of pride entered into them. Then nothing would serve them, but they must have a fine bell cast for them, of virgin silver. So they flung out the good old bell that had been their friend for so long and hung the new one up over the smelting house. Well, behold you! from that very day, nothing was ever found in the mine but stones! The whole treasure of the mountain had tumbled down into the bowels of the earth again."

The Doctor shrugged his shoulders and refrained from comment. One of the burghers jogged the old man's elbow, and whispered to him, "Sixt—thou might'st have just as well spared thy breath—The Doctor's one of the secret——"

- "Secret what? what dost thou mean?"
- "In 'Spruck they've got a Society—They call themselves free thinkers, and believe neither in God nor Devil.
 - "Nonsense! There's no truth in that."
- "But 'tis quite true, and at the head of them is no less a man than the State Chancellor himself. They hold meetings at dead of night too in the vaults of his Castle."
 - "How dost thou know?"
- "See yonder—that fat old woman, in the green gown. She keeps the tavern in the Hof-Gasse where I turn in to drink my glass of an evening, she'll tell anybody who cares to listen, all about it, and who should know better than herself, for many's the night she has had to get things ready for these very forsworn * * * * She lived six years at the Büchsenhaus, and saw them often."

"I tell thee, 'tis all gossip and lies. Why, a few years ago they gave it out that the Chancellor was going to marry our Duchess, and set himself up as Count of the Tyrol! The one's as true as the other, just. The Chancellor is a good loyal German. He has many a foe but they're all in the wrong."

The towns-folk, gathering the drift of this low-toned

colloquy, now took up the word.

"Did'st hear that?" asked the glover of young Würdinger, the smith, who was sitting beside his daughter, a modest looking, quiet young girl, and seemed to have given himself up to the pleasant task of amusing her. After all these years of hopeless devotion to poor Afra, our brave friend was at last trying hard to forget her. He had been in the habit of dropping in at the talkative glover's for some time past, and had almost persuaded himself that he was in love with this simple affectionate girl, who used so little art to conceal her warm partiality for him, and who had the name of being as notable a housewife as her mother.

"Did'st hear what they were saying about the

Chancellor?"

"No, but I can guess what it would be. Every day they seem to contrive new and malicious stories about him."

"Aye, the clouds are gathering thick and fast!" said a third man, "it almost seems as if his day was done."

"A bad thing for us if it is so," said another, "he is a good upright man, and an able man too. The country has much to thank him for, and no mistake about it!"

"I don't dispute it, I agree with you, Herr Kursehauer, I am for the Chancellor," said the glover, "he has always fought bravely for our rights and liberties; yet, it can't be denied that he is proud, and his tongue is like a sharp

sword. Why, he even made a rhyme ridiculing the young Duke the other day!"

"The Duke?—you don't mean it!—What does it say?" cried several voices. The glover looked round doubtfully,

"'Tis not over prudent to repeat such things," he said, "but you'll not get me into trouble?—it is called the priest and the barber,

"A priest and a barber, they rule our land;
We bow to their dictums on every hand.
Now, which do you like, sirs, the cap or the cowl?
For my part, I call them both equally foul!"

The people smiled and looked at each other.

"The priest means Gravenegger, who is the barber?"

"Marello the Duke's Chamberlain, I suppose, they are always made Court barbers when they retire. But I doubt very much whether the Chancellor made those rhymes," said Würdinger.

Dr. Wardtell had gone over to the other side of the green some time before, to speak to a stout young man, a government clerk, to judge by his dress, he now returned and rejoined the group in time to hear the rhyme.

"Right! Master Smith," cried the good Medico, "stick to that; I will uphold you in it! The Chancellor has made many a smart poem in his day, but he never wrote anything so utterly stupid and without point as that! I can pledge you my word for it 'tis none of his."

"But it is by the Chancellor—One of the gentlemen of the household told me so—He bought a pair of chamois leather gloves from me the other day, and then he repeated the lines, just in confidence, saying they were the Chancellor's."

"That fine gentleman was a knave, then!" said Wardtell, "Biener is the last man to be guilty of writing such doggerel as that." "But he ridicules everyone, even Duchess Claudia herself," persisted the enlightened glover.

"That is not true!"

"Don't we all know the couplet, 'Thy land, fair Claudia,' and so on, that he wrote years ago?"

"And do they actually father that upon him? what impertinentias! Why, that couplet was first repeated by a low vagabond who thought to spread it, at the blessing of the fortress at Scharnitz! I was there, I saw the country folk seize the man and—"

"Aye! but then they say the Chancellor let the fellow off, that it mightn't be guessed that he himself had made

the rhyme."

"But that is scandalous! ignominiosum scelus!" cried the doctor "my dear, good, honest, country-men you mustn't let yourselves believe such things as these of our Chancellor. It is true that he has a sharp tongue, is it any wonder if his patience does give way, now and then, when he hears such clouds of venemous insects buzzing about his ear ready to sting him always? He would be more than mortal if it didn't! Those lines were not written by Biener. I say it, and will maintain it; my name is Wardtell, I live at Numero Six Inn-Rain; anybody who chooses to gainsay my words, let him seek me there!"

The good old doctor pulled his hat down fiercely over his eyes as he spoke, and walked off with a belligerent air, leaving the citizens to shake their wise heads over his outburst.

"He's quite right," said the Sixtenbauer, "I was there too, I helped to send the Italian fellow packing. It was just one of those old plots to hurt the Duchess and the Chancellor, but it wasn't so easily done. Why, I can see the fellow now struggling in our hands—Sacra!" he cried, his hand falling heavily on the table.—

"What's the matter?" said a man.

"No! it's not fancy—Why, there he stands, this very moment, there's the very fellow, alive and in the flesh!" cried the old man, greatly excited.

"But who dost mean, Sixt? art thou seeing ghosts?"

"Who, but that self-same vagabond I was talking of! Stop, thou Italian fellow, and tell us who wrote the rhyme!"—With these words, the old man sprang on Marello, who, again shabbily dressed, had been standing a little way off, watching them. As he was dragged towards the table by the muscular arm of the old peasant he exclaimed, struggling furiously,

"Man! what does this mean? I don't know you!"
"But I know you! Can you deny that I have had you
by the throat once before? Do you forget Scharnitz?"

"He is drunk," cried Marello boldly, "Let me go this instant, or else—"

"Lies won't serve your turn this time.—Speak! who made the scandalous verses you repeated that day?"

"But, my dear good souls!" said Marello, seeing how many Germans were present, "can you stand by and see a peaceable, inoffensive man illused in this way? Stand back, old man! I am Duke Ferdinand Karl's Chamberlain."

"Not you! no fear! only Italian lies I tell you—Does anyone suppose his Highness's Chamberlain is such a shabby fellow as this?"

"Is there no one here who will rid me of this dreadful old man!" cried Marello again, "Hi! master Glover, you know me, I was in your shop only a day or two since."

"My word, you will have to release him, friend," said the glover, "sure enough, it is that self-same gentleman who bought the chamois leather gloves of me!"

The old man slackened his grip, and Marello sprang

off lightly, saying with a laugh, "Next time you had better be sure of your man, my friend."

"And if he is the Chamberlain, he's none the less an arrant knave," growled the old Sixtenbauer, "he's as like the other, too, as one drop of water is like another!"

"Chamberlain? That's the barber in the rhyme," said the people, gathering once more round the tables. "What freaks these fine gentlemen are up to! Just see how he had disguised himself. It was strange, though, if this was not the man who repeated the lines at Scharnitz, that he should have given the glover this other verse too."

While this exciting scene took place, a young couple were talking in a sort of pantry behind the bar of Tapster Sauerwein's inn. The pretty Lisa had gone to get some glasses out of a tall glass cupboard at one side of the little room, the window of which, draped with vine leaves and late bunches of grapes, looked on the green in front.

The pretty little maid had grown into a beautiful woman and as years went by the love that Franz Sauerwein had always cherished for her grew only more warm. Every fête day saw him at Mühlau visiting his cousin the tapster, or rather the fair Lisa. To-day he had made his mind up to bring things to an issue with his coquettish mistress; for, to say the truth, Lisa had a way of playing fast and loose with him that was very tantalising and trying to poor Franz. He was now a fine manly fellow, and looked uncommonly well in his long boots, pipeclayed breeches, and looped up hat. He had just been promoted to the post of groom in the royal stables.

As he followed the girl into the quiet back room, she said with a little pout, "Thou! always thou! There's no getting away from thee, Franz!"

"I want a quiet word with thee, Lisa," he said, shutting the door as she turned saucily from him.

"But I have no time, with all those people waiting outside there to be served."

"Lisa, thou must take time to give me an honest answer--Is it to be yes--or no?"

She turned petulantly to the cupboard, and began to push about the glasses, "The master would not like it" she said.

- "He knows all about it Lisa, he won't mind."
- "Very well then, speak-say what thou wilt."
- "Lisa! why art thou always so short with me of late? In old times it wasn't so; thou wert pleased when I told thee how I loved thee—Lisa, dear, why should'st thou try to be so unkind? It hurts me terribly—why art thou so changed?"
 - "I don't know, I only know it is so," she said reluctantly.
 - "Could I help thee to find out?—But thou dost know; it is ever since some devil sent that Italian fellow back again to Innsbruck, that thou art changed. He has been flattering thee, filling thine ears with his lies and folly."

"Is that what thou art after? just fighting with shadows!"

"Can'st thou tell me sincerely that I am wrong, then?" and ought I not to warn thee against him?"

"Warn—warn me against the poor Italian minstrel?" Franz smiled scornfully, "So that is what he gives himself out for, is it? Now that just proves what he is! He can perhaps twang a little on his lute—I could soon beat him out of the field with my zither!—but minstrel? why, Lisa, he is the Duke's Chamberlain!—Now, my girl, it is time an end was made of all this; I am not going to leave Muhlau to night till I can see my way to it, at any rate."

He came and stood over her as he spoke, taking her hand gently and tenderly, "Dear!" he said "thou knowest how long and how truly I have loved thee—I will shut my eyes to all thy little follies; if thou wilt have it so, I will marry thee off hand, and cherish and care for thee all the days of my life. I could not well say this while my poor old mother was alive and I was only a laufer; but my mother is in Heaven now, and I am head groom and messenger with a good salary and a nice little house all ready for thee. I have spoken to my cousin here, and all we have to do is to make a happy ending of the story. There is my hand, Lisa—lay thine in it, and in four weeks' time the wedding shall take place."

The girl was silent, she looked down nervously and played with the bunch of keys at her girdle. She did not wish to say 'no;' yet, somehow, she could not bring herself to say 'yes.' After a while, Franz went on, more eagerly still,

"Don't make me wait too long.—Thou may'st perhaps find a richer or a better man, but never anyone—no, none, Lisa—who will love thee more dearly or who means more honestly and truly to try and make thee happy. Am I so very hateful to thee that it needs that long, long struggle before thou can'st look me in the face and say 'yes'?"

She did look up into his kindly, handsome face; she thought how faithfully he had loved her in all these long years; his voice had a ring of honest feeling in it that moved her at last. She had a soft heart naturally, the 'yes' was just trembling on her lips—her hand was half stretched out to him, when suddenly the door flew open, and Marello's mocking face appeared at it.

"Cospetto! our fair maid is amusing herself in here, while all the guests clamour for wine!" he said coming in.

Franz, naturally angry at being interrupted at such a moment, went up to him and said

"Who does the Duke's Chamberlain seek here, may I ask?"

"I? O niente, niente, Carissimo! I am distressed to have disturbed you, I assure you!"

"You have not disturbed me. What I have just said to Lisa, I should like all the world to hear, and you, Herr Marello, more especially so. I have just made her an honourable offer of marriage, and——"

The Italian broke in, with an insulting laugh,

"Cospetto! E la riposta? What answer has she given to this fine offer may I inquire?"

"I am now waiting for her answer;—Lisa, you will not mind giving it to me because he is here, you will speak out bravely!"

"Or she will let me speak for her, my good fellow. Listen! Such a sweet flower as this is not for you, but for your betters! It would wither away and die in the smell of the royal stables, so just rinse your mouth and leave it alone!"

Franz grew pale, even to his lips; he quivered with rage; yet he kept his eyes fixed steadfastly on Lisa's. She stood, overwhelmed with confusion, the blood rushing to her cheek, then ebbing rapidly, her eyes bent on the ground.

"With your permission, Mr. Chamberlain, Lisa's answer must come from her own lips," said Franz at last. "Lisa—can'st thou not speak" he said presently, in a shaken voice "can'st thou not say 'yes'? Then thou wilt never say it to me—thou hast seen the last of me!"

As he spoke, he hurried from the room, shutting the door behind him. She made a feeble attempt to follow him, she cried "Franz!" as if just awaking from some dream, but Marello held her fast, saying as he threw his

arm round her insolently, "Lovely one! let that groom go—men of a very different rank from his know how to value your charms!"

"Do not touch me!" she sobbed, "You are a false man—nobody should trust you!"

"I false? Why such a fearful charge as that?"

"Did you not call yourself a poor minstrel? I would not believe Franz, just now, when he told me who you really were, and now I find he was quite right—If you meant well by a poor girl, would you disguise yourself like this?"

"But can'st thou not guess why I did it, Bellissima mia / does thy heart not tell thee? Why, it was to try thee. I wanted thee to love me first for myself, as a poor Maestro, then I meant to surprise thee by telling thee who I really was!"

Lisa struggled in his arms more faintly; though she looked up doubtfully in his face, she could not but feel flattered,

"I can hardly believe it though," she whispered, "I don't think it can be true! How could a grand gentleman like you and a poor little country girl like me, ever come together?"

"Carina mia, look into my eyes—Now, can'st thou doubt me any longer? Don't they tell thee how I love thee?"

"Really, though—Do you mean honestly, truly?"

"If I did not love thee so dearly, I could hate thee for that doubt. But how is it with thine own sweet self? Dost thou love me, *Anima mia*?"

"Do not ask me---'

"Then I must answer it for myself" he cried, and he threw his arms round her, kissing her blushing cheek. The girl protested but feebly.

"It is a sad fact, my angel-but so it is-my duties

will not allow me to acknowledge thee openly as my wife just yet. All the court servants are to have private apartments in the winter, and then I shall have a beautiful home to offer mia sposa. Ah, how my little Signora Camereria will adorn it! Chamberlain's lady,—that sounds a little better than Groom's wife, methinks!"

It did sound but too enticing. The deluded girl allowed him to woo her,—responded, in some degree, to his caresses, and while lingering with this deceiver she forgot the bitter heartache she had given to her faithful old lover. Repeated calls at last disturbed the tête à tête and recalled Lisa to her duties.

Meanwhile, a disturbance had been taking place under the chestnut trees before the inn.

Some men leading a long string of coupled up horses had arrived, and stopped to refresh. Being Jews, these people were not allowed to join the rest of the guests. After endeavouring to fasten the horses, as well as they could, to some rails close by, they seated themselves on the grass, and passed round an old tankard without a lid, handed to them by one of the hostlers. Abraham May, who never neglected a chance of driving a good bargain, had sent his nephew Aaron, at the first rumour of peace, to buy up such of the horses sold by the Bavarian Cavalry now disembodied, as might sell again at a profit. He had come this evening to meet and inspect his new purchases, and just now was deep in a 'deal' with Sauerwein. Aaron was in difficulties, for the beasts began to kick and fight and became almost unmanageable. Just then a horseman rode up and slung his bridle on the hook near the door of the hostelry. This person was accoutred like an officer in the Tyrolese army, but a close observer might have seen that he wore his cuirass and helmet awkwardly and seemed a good deal oppressed by their weight. He called for a measure of wine; but just

as he was putting the glass to his lips he perceived the party of Jews and paused.

The stout young man with whom Dr. Wardtell had been talking, came up and saluted the rider, who in

return gave him a military salute.

"Who would have thought of seeing you here," said the civilian in a clear distinct voice; then, under his breath, "Henrici—thou art quite unrecognisable in that disguise."

"I am riding post with orders for Kufstein, Mr. Secretary" replied the officer, "This armour doesn't suit me at all, Heimbl!" was added in an undertone "I

expect to be found out every minute."

This fear was not groundless, for Aaron, leading one of the horses, had drawn near and was gazing intently at him.

"I should be immensely obliged, sir, if you would give this parcel to the priest as you ride past," said Heimbl, then, as before, he added in a whisper, "this is all I could manage to bring, but Troyer was to have met us with a few more odds and ends."

"I will do your errand with pleasure, Mr. Secretary. If Troyer is coming he ought to be here now—Heimbl! I thank thee from the bottom of my heart—there are few like thee—a friend in need is a friend indeed—May I entreat thee to see after my poor forsaken wife?" was again hastily murmured in Heimbl's ear.

"Thou may'st trust me—while I live she shall want for nothing—" Henrici's blue eyes filled with tears,

"You can't tell what it is to me to have to leave her at such a time as this—dear patient soul, what has she not gone through for me! Heimbl, when you know her better you will understand what this separation means for both of us!" he murmured.

"I know—I know, it is a sad ending to thy romance. I warned thee how it would be, but of course it was all in vain!"

"We were so entirely happy in our little home, then the one thing we longed for came—our babe—Heimbl, I cannot leave them! I will go back—"

"And have to suffer imprisonment for nobody knows how long? My information is quite sure—if you go back you will only double your wife's distress and pain."

"But it is intolerable, quite unheard of—I who have done absolutely nothing—"

"You call it nothing to have made a Christian of old Abraham's child? The Jew is all powerful now, he is a man of substance. From the Duke down they all borrow of him; he has vowed to let them off with one per cent less interest for the future if they imprison you—Do you see, my friend, how it is?"

"But I can't imagine what his charge against me is the old offence was committed so many years ago."

"Oh, most guileless youth! he needn't have far to seek for a weapon if he wants to cripple thee. New judges may take a new view of it; even if you should be acquitted in the end, think of the long lying in gaol awaiting your trial—Why, that in itself would avenge the Jew and kill your poor wife!"

"Be sure you go with all speed to Chancellor Biener; entreat him to intercede for me, and I may soon get back again.

"Give up the thought of ever coming back here. You have friends and work at Augsburg—stay there. I will arrange so that the wife and child shall join you there, you can meet her at the frontiers—This country is as unsafe for the Chancellor now as it is for you. He is like yonder setting sun, sinking fast. His power is gone!"

While this whispered colloquy was proceeding, Aaron was lurking near, hoping to overhear a word now and then. In fact his suspicion had become a certainty. He was stealing back to impart his discovery to the old Jew when Henrici observed him, "Hush!—that is Abraham May's nephew," he said, "I fear he recognises me."

"Take hold of your bridle, sit firm and use the spur—write soon, and comfort yourself with this, I will look after your wife as if she was my own sister."

In passing one of the horses Heimbl gave it a poke in the ribs, he jerked the cord tying another. Soon the whole string were rearing, plunging, and fighting in such a dangerous way, that all the Jews were obliged to run to them at once, old Abraham calling out to his nephew "Thou useless lout! If these horses are allowed to damage each other like this where will my profit be I should like to know? A nice bargain indeed! lame horses in exchange for good money!"

Aaron muttered, as he tried to get the animals pacified, "I would rather they had lamed me than have seen that fellow escape!—Uncle, that was Henrici dressed up like a cavalry officer—he has got off scot free."

"He must have got wind of what I meant to do, then—"growled the old man, pulling at his white beard, "—Let him ride! he may chance to come by a broken neck—at all events he'll be out of my sight. Couple up the horses, Aaron, we will go."

"Make no attempt to pursue, him, Uncle? Let him go?"

"Boy, we could never overtake him now. See the start he has got of us—No, we will go back, I may think of some plan when I get home. Couple up the horses, I say."

Pursuit would have been impossible, for on the road from Hall, the soldiers now came in sight. They

blocked all the way, their drums and fifes sounding a merry greeting to the crowds who poured forth to welcome them home.

This was the first tangible proof of the reality of the peace that the country people had yet seen. As the good fellows came marching stoutly along the road, flags waving, drums beating, guns shouldered and military discipline at an end, burgher and peasant met them with open arms, and all embraced like brothers. The glad sounds, announcing all this national rejoicing, were repeated again and again from all the echoing crags and hill-sides around, far into the night.

When Abraham May got back to Innsbruck it was already dark. He threw his bridle to Aaron, leaving him to look to the horses, and hurried to his own house, which he entered by a pass-key. Going up the stairs, he met an old servant-maid, looking frightened and confused; regarding her keenly, he asked,

"Where is Rebecca? Where is my wife?"

"She has gone out."

"So late in the evening! Wherefore is she gone out? Who came to summon her? With whom went she forth?"

"I do not know."

"Deborah—the Lord of hosts can see thy lying heart, even as I can see thy lying face—He will reward. thee!-Bring me another light; I have urgent business, I may not tarry; the gates will be locked ere long."

The old woman reached him a candle, and he entered the usual living room. Opening a box, he took out several gold pieces. He was about to leave the room, when the light chanced to gleam on a brightly cleaned knife lying on a shelf near at hand. He grasped it eagerly, felt its edge, and then stuck it

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through his girdle. Observing him, the old servant said anxiously,

"Good Fat her Abraham, what would'st thou do with the knife? Prythee leave it."

"It is late and dark; the streets are not over safe; there may be those abroad against whom a wise man will arm himself. The old Jew is only trying to save his skin, old Deborah." He added some words which she could not catch, and then hastened down the stair and out into the black night.

He crept along stealthily, feeling by the wall. From time to time he clutched at the handle of the knife. tempest was raging in the old man's heart. Dark, dreadful thoughts, as yet vague and formless, chased each other through his brain. The one which haunted him persistently, vividly, was that now, at last, hemight be avenged on the man who had caused him all the pain and sorrow he had endured. He did not tell himself, as yet, how this was to be; but the one idea of revenge was horribly present with him. Might he not with one blow crush this man who had so basely robbed him? If he did indeed kill his undutiful child—she who had forsworn the faith of her fathers she who had left him in his old age-should he not be avenged on him? aye-and on his wife Rebecca too, who, disobeying his imperative orders, had stolen away to seek her wicked and abandoned daughter—He guessed where his wife had gone when he learnt that she had stolen out so late, and he was filled with a blind fury against her.

At length, after threading numberless dark streets and alleys, he came to a surburb where he saw a little house standing, somewhat apart, in a garden.

The garden gate was unlatched and a light was in one of the windows. In this pretty little retreat, Henrici

and his wife had lived most happily for some years past.

The intruder stole in at the gate, and creeping along, under the shadow of the wall, he looked through the window.

A woman was lying on a couch; sleeping, it seemed, for her face was turned away from him. Close beside her stood a little cot, partly concealed by a high backed chair over which was hung a brown cloak—Rebecca's cloak! She had then disobeyed him, no doubt now remained. A kind of madness seized on the old man, horrible thoughts came to him.

He crept to the house door; that also was unfastened. He went in; the chamber door was not even latched. Rebecca might have only gone out to fetch something, not a moment was to be lost! The door did not even creak on its hinges—He found himself standing by his daughter's couch.——

"Yes!" he muttered "it is fated!—I will do it if they should slay me for it. My name is Abraham—I will sacrifice my only child as our Father did—I will present my peace offering to my God—I will plunge my knife into her heart—I will destroy this witness of my shame and sorrow—the child of the Christian!"

He grasped the knife handle; then he bent over the sleeper. How white and thin she was! She had fallen into that profound sleep which follows exhaustion and distress, and looked almost like one who has ceased to breathe; but an occasional contraction of the brow as if in pain, shewed that feebly as her life current flowed, she was not dead. And how beautiful she looked even in her deathlike pallor! It was the same lovely, delicate, face he had loved so well; beneath those deep fringed lids the glorious eyes were veiled that he had once taken such pride in. How often those dark eyes had been raised to

his full of love—Yes! this was his own beautiful, beloved child—Something stole into the old man's heart like a sunbeam, and the ice that had been contracting it melted. He stretched out his arms towards her, he was just going to clasp her to his breast, when suddenly he beheld a small crucifix, clasped tightly in one of her hands. Then he shrank away. What had he been about to do? How could he have so far forgotten his fell purpose? He almost staggered as he said to himself "No! I know this woman no longer! My Sarah is dead—buried—Yet, I cannot stain my soul with blood. No! not even the blood of the child—The Lord hath said, 'Thou shalt not kill.'—But I will carry away this child, I will rescue it—It shall be brought up in the faith of its forefathers!"

He turned down the coverlet of the little bed. The little creature nestled amongst the white pillows like a rosebud, breathing softly in the sleep of health and innocence.

Some heavenly atmosphere seemed to surround the little being. Abraham's hand had already touched it,—he shrank back, "I cannot—I cannot!" he murmured, "How could I tear thee from thy mother's arms to lay thee in those of some strange woman? No! innocent as thou art, I cannot even curse thee—Thou art my own flesh and blood; I cannot sacrifice thee for the sin of the ungodly."—The old man stretched out his hands in benediction over the sleeping boy.

"May the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob watch over thee! May the Lord lay his hand upon thee and bless thee with the blessing of Noah! may He not visit upon thee the sins of thy parents!" he murmured.

He stood for a moment in silent prayer; then he quitted the room, the house, unobserved. As Sarah, or Maria, as she was now christened, slept on, a slight flush began to tinge her cheek, the first sign of returning

strength. Had her father's blessing put to flight the angel of death, hovering, but just now, so near to her?

For many weeks past, Duchess Claudia had been unable to quit her bed of suffering. Her health was shattered past all hope of recovery; her beautiful form was wasted and attenuated; painful seizures, suffocation, palpitation, fainting fits, recurred even more frequently as the sad end approached; they became more prolonged as her strength to rally from them was diminished. Only those few who knew the particulars of that last fatal interview with her son, could understand this rapid decay of the vital powers. As she was carried home insensible, that terrible morning, the disease which had long threatened her developed itself with a suddenness quite inexplicable to those who were ignorant of its cause.

Indeed, it was only her matchless courage that had enabled her to revive at all after that long fainting fit; a weaker spirit would have long since sunk to rest.

She lay on a couch in her sitting room, her head propped high to enable her to breathe, dressed as usual in black. The curtains were drawn back from the high windows, that they might admit the last rays of the setting sun to her fast darkening eyes.

On a small table beside her were her breviary, her medicine, and a vase of fresh flowers. On another table stood her favourite old clock, with its busy little knight hammering out the hours, inexorably as of old. Alas! how few more he might record for her!

She had just recovered from a frightful attack of palpitation and breathlessness, and was lying, quite exhausted, her bosom heaving fitfully, her eyes closed and sunken. Father Erasmus Guardian was bending

over her; he said softly "Oh God, let us not dread to die. Death is not the end of being, only a change. Without Thee, O God! nothing lives. Thine arm sustains the mountains and the little insects that live in the grass, that clothes them. They perish, the place thereof shall know them no more, but we perish not; for we are Thy creatures, Thy children. We come to Thee by a dark way, but the bourne is bright; it lies surely before us, for our spirit flies to Thee."

Claudia's breath began to come more easily; her strength was reviving; the great, dark, eyes opened, and they lighted up her poor worn face with their brightness and beauty, even yet. The ghastly look was gone, and something of her old expression had come back. She spoke, and her voice was wonderfully clear and strong.

"It has passed off again," she said, "the weight is lifted from my breast. For one instant it was as if I could see through the veil; but I have come back once more from those gates—It is for the last time—With the next seizure the slender thread must break."

"Let us endure faithfully unto the end. When the short agony is past, how beautifully the newborn soul will expand in the soft airs of Heaven!"

"Oh, how I long for that Heaven! It is so hard to breathe here below—"

"All mortal pain ceases, when we quit this frail body. Let us wait, turning our eyes to our dear crucified Lord—to our Saviour, who once suffered agony greater than has been borne by any other child of clay."

"Soon, soon, it will be over—I shall be with my Saviour in eternity—Father! I would try to be with Him here below once more while I still live—I would receive the sacred elements."

"I will call the Father Confessor," he said, turning away, but she made a sign for him to stay.

"From your own hand, good Father! I would tread the dark way holding by your hand—Oh, that I had known you sooner!—I was once restless, over anxious; since I have known you, all solicitudes are gone. I am resigned—tranquil—I feel a sweet comforting assurance that I never felt before."

"The precepts of Christ are loving and gentle, nothing is of Him that is not of Love."

"Hasten Father,—I have not long to linger here—What earthly cares remain, I will now attend to." She gazed for a minute steadfastly at the glimmering window, then she murmured to herself,

"Most wise old Carrara! I see thy honest face before me. Yes! I too have at last laid aside the bright toys of existence!—And yet I would recall some of them—there were precious jewels amongst them."

Presently she called Schildhofer to her. The poor old man had been hiding himself in a dark corner, trying vainly to fight down his bitter grief and seem brave. "Hast thou sent for Ferdinand?" she said, "I would speak with him; he might perchance lay my words to heart now—I would be at peace with my son."

"He has been sent for," said the old man.

"Then why does he not come? Schildhofer—thou art keeping something from me—All thy life, thou hast only spoken the truth to me, wilt thou not speak it now when I am on my death bed? Tell me, why does my son tarry?"

"He is gone out hunting" said Schildhofer, reluctantly. She shivered and clutched at her left side, convulsively. As soon as the throbbing was a little stilled, she asked, "And when did'st thou send for him?"

"Highness—I sent yesterday evening, as thou wished; I sent again this morning; another express has gone just now."

"Ferdinand—son! why must thou tear thy mother's heart, as with hot pincers? Oh God! Thou who rulest over princes, why are my sons far from me now? My dear, good Sigismund—if I could but have seen my warm hearted, loving boy once again!—Bring hither my daughters, Schildhofer, they at least can receive their mother's blessing."

"There are others waiting out there—thou sent for them, but I was afraid to let them come in," said the old man.

"I know—fear nothing—let them come to me—Not both at once; let Elizabeth—I mean the Chancellor's wife—come first."

Schildhofer went out of the room and immediately returned, leading in Elizabeth. As she approached, the poor thing sank on her knees weeping bitterly. The Duchess held out her hand and she pressed it to her lips, wetting it with her tears.

"I am glad to see thee," said Claudia, very gently and quietly, "Elizabeth, my dear, it is long—long since we have met. Art thou quite happy? Ah! I see that thou art. Thou art lovelier, more noble in thy bearing—I rejoice to see it, my child—May'st thou always be as happy as now!"

"Oh what am I that I should be so? Nothing, nothing, but what your Highness has made me," she sobbed.

"I said I would be as a mother to thee—Is that thy boy? let him come to me, what a sweet, open countenance!—a little like his father's—"

A happy, yet pathetic expression came over her face as she looked into the boy's bright eyes; he returned her gaze bravely and trustingly.

"I will pray that my blessing is fulfilled—God give thee peace, dear child, peace for thy soul; no other blessing can equal that." Then she sank back wearily, sighing "Farewell!" and motioning to them to leave her. Weeping, with uncertain steps, Elizabeth left the room with her boy.

Claudia lay with closed eyes, breathing heavily; for a while she was not conscious that Biener had entered as his wife went out. The strong man was shaken to the depths of his soul to see her thus. Another spasmodic seizure, less severe than the former one, had deprived her of breath for a time. At last it passed off—"Your Highness has permitted"——he faltered.

At the sound of that loyal voice, a sweet smile stole over her wan face. She opened her eyes, and they rested calmly, contentedly, on his, as he knelt by her couch. She had never seen him since she had retired from the conduct of the State,—had, indeed, avoided every chance of a meeting, now that business did not necessitate it.

"Yes—I wished to see you once more," she said softly, "I longed to see you so sorely! When two people have been such faithful friends as you and I have always been, it is only right that they should grasp each other's hands before the great separation comes."

"That dreadful day may be far distant. Your Highness may recover—"

"My friend—take hold of my hand, look into my face, —you will never do so again—We have been true, and honest and brave,—we may look at each other without fear or remorse may we not?"

"O Claudia—my beloved mistress!" he cried, bending his head over her poor thin hand, with a burst of grief he could not master.

"And I have to ask for your forgiveness, too, my friend. I was deaf to your entreaties; how bitterly I have repented it—Oh! how bitterly! You have suffered, my friend—I fear they make it hard for you to remain in office."

"To feel that all one tries to do is of no avail, does indeed take away all heart and courage."

"And yet, Biener, I cannot release you! You must promise me to still remain."

"If it comforts you, I do promise it."

"I thank you—You will not forsake my son? He must in time come to see his errors—You are silent—Do you

not think so? May I not die, hoping?"

"Duke Ferdinand has a kind, an excellent heart; but he is frivolous, weak; he shrinks from all serious thought, he likes those only who make life pleasant and easy to him; he hates those who would hold him back from dangerous amusements; yet I do not despair of him. When he is a little older, he may look more justly and rightly at things. He may become a kindly, considerate, ruler of his people; but that may be after years of bitter disillusion, of sad experience."

"And you must be near him, Biener. You only can guide and uphold him. How gladly he will grasp that good hand of yours, when that better time has come!"

"I doubt it. I am virtually disgraced now. I have no influence with him, he does not heed my words. It is your Highness who has given me my brief security; they have not dismissed me because, only, they would not pain the kind mistress who has honoured me with her confidence for so long—Claudia! you are my guardian angel. You have been my inspiration, have made my life worth living; all will fade away when those dear eyes are closed—Oh! how desolate, how useless my life will be then!"

"No! no!" she said, "If I have been able to guard you here, I still will watch over you from that brighter world I am so soon to see—Here is a letter, my last behest to Ferdinand. If danger ever threatens you, give it to him. He may not heed my voice now, but when it

speaks to him from the tomb he will listen to its pleadings."

"My Mistress! my Sovereign! Unworthy as I am, how can such heavenly goodness—such friendship—have been granted to me!"

"No, my friend, it is I who had always need to be grateful," she said gently, "you have yielded to my prayers—have kept a post you are unhappy in—Never in all these years have you failed me, in word or deed. And yet—" she stopped—then she murmured faintly,

"Yet, my friend, I have been truer than you; you remember that bright summer morning, years, years ago—the 'Pastor Fido?' My heart still glows when I think of it. Ah! to me, at least, that was no fleeting illusion. How was it? The older love may fade before the new—"

He bent over her—she was beautiful even in the shadow of death—he whispered, "Thine,—heart and soul! Thine, in supremest love! Claudia, it were profanation to lift the veil, but this much I must tell thee—One image alone has lived, enshrined in the sanctuary of my heart, in all these years; it never can fade, never be less loved. We shall meet again! our spirits will mingle in a purer, more holy rapture in that world to which thou—"

She turned away her face, she was too weak to bear his words; but she whispered softly,

"Guglielmo—till then—farewell!—we will meet—there!"

His lips touched that frail, transparent hand; he could control himself no longer, in his despair, he cried,

"Is there no help—no hope? I cannot bear it! Claudia! my heart will break!"

She gazed at him, and a heavenly smile lit up her wasted features, then she whispered again,

"No help, no healing for this wound but only-death.

Guglielmo!—for the last time—farewell! Friend—beloved—"

"Claudia!—my angel—my best beloved—sun of my soul—!"

She sank back quite exhausted—With the bitter tears welling up in his eyes, Biener hurried from the room.

The young Princesses were coming in; Schildhofer had gone to bring them while Biener had been alone with Claudia. Clara Isabel, the elder, seemed to have wept till the fountain of her tears was exhausted. She looked stunned by the awful consciousness of what was coming. Shuddering, almost senseless, she sank down by her mother's couch and buried her tear-stained face in her dress. The little Leopoldine, quite beside herself with grief, threw herself upon her mother, covering her face with tears and kisses. Old Schildhofer tried to pull her away, fearing she might hurt the dying woman.

"Be wise, Princess Leopoldine," he said, "See! thou wilt make thy mother sorry with all that crying!"

But Claudia drew them the closer to her.

"My dear ones," she gasped, "be good!—Do not forget me. Tell my dear Sigismund that I blessed him—and Ferdinand—oh! where is Ferdinand? my son! my son! Can no one see him coming?"

Then all was silent. The great agitation, the effort she had made to speak, had been more than the mortal frame could bear. One last terrible convulsion came, the palpitation returned with deadly violence, she raised herself suddenly, seemed to fight for breath for a moment; then she fell back, rigid and white.

When Father Erasmus came, carrying the sacred elements, she was dead.

Schildhofer drew away the poor girls, and an awful' stillness fell upon the chamber, broken only by the tinkle

of the little bell, as mass for the dead was celebrated, and by poor little 'Poble's sobs. The fragrance of the incense filling the air made the mysterious, unseen universe seem almost present to them.

The little knight hammered out an hour; it was as if he sounded the knell of her for whom time was now no more—the beautiful, the gifted, Duchess Claudia!

Suddenly, loud voices, hurried footsteps, were audible. The door was burst open, the young Duke rushed in—his dress and face splashed with mud and foam from furious riding. "Mother! oh mother! art thou dead?" he cried, "Hast thou left me? Can I never hear thy voice again?" No one could speak, but Father Guardian pointed upwards with a reverent gesture. Then Ferdinand, with one wild despairing cry, flung himself across the couch of the dead.

The church bells were tolling through all the land, for the funeral train of the beloved Duchess Claudia was setting forth for the Church of the Jesuits—that stately pile, begun by Duke Leopold and finished by her who was about to be laid there by his side, in the royal vault, all her sorrow and suffering over now. As the long procession slowly wound its way, a sound of weeping, from the vast crowd of country people who had poured in from all parts of the kingdom, mingled with the muffled drums, the wailing of the trumpets, the solemn voices of the priests chanting misereres and masses.

Borne on a horse led by two noble gentlemen, their swords reversed, were the banners and arms of Austria, of the Tyrol, of Tuscany, and of Wurtemberg. The crown and sceptre followed, resting on a velvet cushion. Then came the coffin, richly gilt and ornamented, piled with fresh flowers that shed their

fragrance all around. Thirty of her subjects, a nobleman and a peasant alternately, bore her remains to their last resting place; young boys carrying torches surrounded the bier.

Slowly, mournfully, as they made their way, the thud of the muffled drum, the wail of the trumpet, followed them. It had been some slight alleviation to Ferdinand's remorseful grief, that his mother's obsequies should be as magnificent as possible. His heart waswrung by a new sensation, he was deeply penitent. As he stood by the bier his face was pale as death, his eyes red with weeping. His young wife who was beside him, seemed scarcely able to support her trembling limbs. Biener and old Schildhofer, by the Duke's desire, were with the royal family. Elizabeth followed with the ladies in waiting. The sound of weeping and of praying came from all present, and this, the last garland of love, as it were, laid on her bier, was far more precious than all the outward pomp and ceremony of her funeral.

The vigils had been chanted, the libera intoned; the coffin carried down the wide marble steps of the vault, and placed on a small altar there.

The gates of brass had been closed and sealed, and all the sad train were gone, save only two persons. Biener and his wife still knelt together on the steps of the high altar. At last he said,

"Dear wife, let us depart; we dare not grieve for her, she is in the realms of glory now. We can but hold her for ever sanctified in our hearts!"

"I cannot bear to leave her thus alone!" she said, and she went back to the gates of the vault, laying her forehead against the cold brass railings, "I would thank her once more—even in the darkness of the tomb, she may hear me!" "Thou may'st indeed thank her, Elizabeth," he said as he gently raised her; then, carried away by his grief. "Yes! here, here in the presence of her cold remains, I will tell thee all that we have owed to her; it is meet thou should'st know what a noble heart is turning now to dust! She sacrificed not her life only, but her love—her hope of earthly happiness—to her duty. She was so great, that she was able to resign the man she loved, to lead him to another's arms—to build up their happiness from the ruins of her own life—May the blessing of God rest on her hallowed spirit!"

"Then my foreboding was true!" whispered Elizabeth, and she sank trembling into her husband's arms.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PORTRAIT OF THE DUCHESS.

LD Schildhofer was waiting, one winter's morning, in the Duke's ante-room. His hair and beard now rivalled in whiteness the snow that lay thick on the gardens and housetops outside. The heat diffused by the great pagoda-shaped stove seemed acceptable to the various persons occupying the room, and beguiling the long hours of waiting by gossip.

A dark complexioned, middle-aged man was pacing up and down the room. He glanced impatiently, from time to time, at the doors leading to the Duke's private apartments.

They opened at last, and Marello appeared. The stranger greeted him with a respectful bow. Waving back all others who approached, the Chamberlain beckoned this Italian-looking person into the same window occupied by the old peasant.

"Signor Ranconi, I fear you have been waiting some time," Marello began politely, in Italian, not heeding Schildhofer.

"I have indeed; I had made every effort to be punctual, and now it seems that I have come in vain!"

"Possibly, but not probably. His Highness has been pleased to hear you are at Innsbruck; he may return now at any moment; an opportunity will be found, I promise you, before four o'clock, the royal dinner hour, for laying the matter before him."

"My most grateful thanks to you, Signor—May I enquire where the Duke has been?"

"You perceive that the Court is in deep mourning. The Duke's mother has died recently, and unexpectedly, this has affected his Highness so painfully that it was deemed well for him to take a little recreation away from his sad surroundings here. He has been staying at the Convent of Stams for a fortnight past."

"A strange place to visit for amusement, surely?"

"Oh! the good Fathers are jolly companions, even if
they are saints. They have an excellent cellar, and the

they are saints. They have an excellent cellar, and the mountains round about there abound with goats and deer. The fresh snow served us well for tracking the creatures. Ah! many little distractions are to be found up there, that the world below little guesses at!"

"I am curious to see this young Duke of yours, I confess. With us this Court is called 'little Italy.' We

hear more of your grand doings than you suppose."
"Not far wrong either. You have only yourself to thank for it, if you have not yet had an audience.
Why did you come under the protection of the Duchess?"

"But is she not a Tuscan Princess? How should her protection injure me?"

Marello laughed, "You must know, Signor, that here in Italy Minor, as it is in Italy Major, the Roman power is apt to swamp the Tuscan."

A little mannikin just now came in, and marched up the room with a self-important strut. His enormous head was adorned with a cap and bells, and his little deformed body fantastically bedizened.

"The Court fool, I presume?" said Ranconi.

"Well, the Court dwarf, at any rate, generally called 'the small giant' in contrast to the 'great giant,' a monster we keep here because he is seven feet high. The two fight like cat and dog, and the Duke takes

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much delight in their oddities—"Hi!" he cried to the dwarf "where's your friend Henial to-day, Master Brutsel? Art not jealous? The Duke took the big brother to Stams, and left the little one at home."

The dwarf grinned diabolically; planting himself

before Marello, he cried in a shrill voice,

"Master Chamberlain! you may find me a ticklish customer, if you don't mind. Any man who scoffs at me may make up his mind to a good drubbing."

"He hates his big brother; he would poison him if he

could," said Marello in a loud aside.

"And this person here in peasant dress, is he another Court fool?" said the stranger

Marello burst into a loud laugh, "Capital! first rate!" he said, "you don't know what a fine thing you have said. You have just hit it—He is a species of Court fool in a peasant's dress."

Up to this point Schildhofer had not chosen to notice the pair, though he knew enough of the Italian patois to guess at what they were saying. Now, however, he came out of his corner, his shrewd eye measured them from head to foot, and he said,

"That's a truer saying than you think for, Master Chamberlain, I have been playing the fool here too long; but my post will very soon be vacant—open for competition! You can go in for it, cap and bells and all, if you're so disposed."

Marello, who had a holy horror of offending any one who enjoyed any sort of Court favour, was considerably taken aback by these words; he tried to smooth things over as best he might.

"Surely you could not imagine I was in earnest?" he said, "But what do you mean by saying that?"

"'Tis easy enough to tell you, Mr. Chamberlain. I grow an old fellow; the air of 'Spruck never agreed

with me, so I am going home to my native valley." Here Chancellor Biener came up to them, "Yes! I am going home, Excellency; my work is done. I'll leave a clear field here for anybody who may have a taste for the post of jackanapes. Excellency, how would it be if thou wert to come with me? There's many a good castle near Meran in which, I warrant, thou could'st settle thyself snugly."

"Who knows what may come to pass," said Biener gravely; "for the present, however I can only stay here and put my trust in Providence."

The clatter of horses' hoofs was now heard, the ring of the halberdiers' rifles as they grounded arms, and presently Ferdinand came in, wrapped in a furred mantle, and fresh from riding.

Courtiers seemed suddenly to spring up on all sides, crowding round him deferentially. Conspicuous amongst the first to press forward was Gravenegger.

The Duke looked gay and affable. He spoke to Ferrari and most of the other officials; but Biener, who was standing just before him, he passed without a word; he seemed indeed pointedly to avoid addressing him.

A large gilt portfolio had been placed, conspicuously on a table in the centre of the room. As he perceived it, Ferdinand cried "What precious thing may this contain?"

"Your Highness, it is an engraving of the portrait of the late Duchess Claudia," said Luniati.

"Then let me see it at once," he cried, "my orders have been carried out promptly, indeed!"

Marello hastened to untie the string, and held up the likeness of his mother before the young man. He gazed at it steadily for a time, then a genuine, though transient, expression of grief was visible in his face—"My dear excellent mother!" he cried "See that this is framed,

Marello, in as costly and beautiful a style as possible, and let it be hung over my own writing table. It is an admirable likeness!"

When so pointedly slighted, Biener had drawn back a little, biting his lips. He whispered to old Schildhofer, who was standing beside him, "His writing table! Yes—ir he wishes to forget what his mother looked like, he could not have chosen a better place for her portrait to hang. He is months at a time without using it."

"Pay the excellent artist who has engraved this, at once," continued Ferdinand, "he has succeeded admirably; Marello—see that he has an honorarium of a thousand ducats from the royal treasury."

"There are not a thousand ducats in the treasury just now," whispered Biener again.

A murmur went round. Such munificence was indeed princely. Ferrari exclaimed enthusiastically,

"Before such noble patronage of the arts as this, the magnificence of even the Medici must pale and dwindle! Papal splendours are even outdone! Your Highness, this is a favourable moment perhaps for introducing to your notice Signor Beppo Ranconi of Bologna, a renowned poet and improvisatore. He has visited and charmed their Majesties at Madrid and Vienna; but to crown his triumphs, he would now perform in presence of your Highness and your Court."

"You are most welcome," said Ferdinand, "See that an apartment is prepared, Marello. Soon we shall call upon you for a specimen of your talents; I love poetry, and your credentials are good."

Ferdinand was then about to retire to his private apartments, but old Schildhofer came forward.

"Ah! this is a novel sight—Schildhofer has found his way to Court at last!" he said.

"I come to beg a favour of your Highness," said the

old man, "My daughter is ill, we are home-sick for our native valley; we would fain be back in the Passeyerthal, the air is lighter there, I have come to beg to be allowed to leave 'Spruck."

"But is a Tyrolese not his own master? What have I got to do with this?" said Ferdinand.

"By your Highness's leave, I don't think it is quite my own affair. I have lived here in 'Spruck fifteen long years, neither of my own free will nor for any business of my own, so I thought it right to let you know before I went."

"I know my mother trusted you, valued you, as a faithful servant."

The old peasant looked oddly at the Duke; he stuck his thumbs into his broad leathern belt, and then he said, "My word—No! That is not it at all! A free Schildhofer is servant to nobody, be he prince or king—He has his own house, his own land and owes nothing to anybody. My lady Claudia thought me worthy to be called her good friend, though I am but a poor peasant."

Ferdinand knit his brows, "Well," he said scornfully, "I must try to bear it, I suppose, even if thou wilt not be as good a friend to the son as thou hast been to the mother."

"Ah 'twas quite another matter then. It was war time, thy lady mother was a sorrowful widow. Everything is peaceful and prosperous now. Thou hast ladies and gentlemen in plenty and to spare—thou art old enough to judge whether they are true or false—thou hast no need of me, so in God's name, I would leave thee."

During this speech, Ferdinand's face had clouded over more and more. Turning to Gravenegger and beckoning him to follow him, he left the room without deigning to bestow another look or word on the old man, Schildhofer's face became blank with surprise; his rugged features began to work; for a moment, he could scarcely keep down his tears, but he did conquer his emotion; and then he turned to leave the room, saying first, however to Biener,

"Excellency, hast thou not thought better of it yet?

Don't thou wait to be kicked out like me!"

"Old friend—I cannot desert my post."

"Then there's no more to be said. I'll come and bid 'God bless thee' at the Büchsenhaus before I leave 'Spruck, Excellency." He added in a low voice, "There's one thing, too, that I must say. Thou hast been quite good now for a long time, not jesting or biting at folks; but thou art taking to thine old ways again, I can see. Thy tongue is just like the Bise when it blows over the Jansenberg into the Passeyerthal. How often have I besought of thee to bridle it! It will be the ruin of thee yet."

"Don't grieve, old friend," said Biener with a bitter smile, "It is getting ground down by millstones on every side. My tongue will soon be dumb."

Schildhofer left the room, and while the others gathered about the portfolio to admire the engraving, the Chancellor stood aloof, thoughtfully regarding them.

"Your Excellency seems to take no interest in this fine work of art," remarked Ferrari "I should have supposed, as her late Highness's most confidential minister, you might have been interested in her portrait."

"Come!" added Gröbner "Do look at it, it is worth much, even as a work of art, to say nothing of the likeness."

"And then the verses, how appreciative!" added Ferrari.

"Claudia! to Hapsburg and to Medici akin, The artist can but paint thy perfect face. Could he thy glorious character unfold The *Universe* its match doth not contain,"

"It would not be easy to compress a higher eulogy than that into four lines, would it, Excellency?"

Biener gazed sadly at the engraving; he shook his head—"Poor Princess!" he said "thou hast suffered much during thy life; can they not let thee rest even in thy grave!"

"You find there is something to criticise in it then?"
"I do indeed, it has the greatest fault that a portrait can have, it is not a likeness."

"You jest! Why, even to the smallest detail, it is herself. That curve of the lip, the lock of hair falling over her forehead just as it always did—"

"And the very ring upon her finger, copied so exactly," said Gröbner, "Why, there is her favorite timepiece too, on the table by her side—the little knight raising his hammer to strike."

"I only wish I could see it as you all profess to do; but I cannot find it satisfactory. If a portrait is to be of any value, it should reflect and express the character of the person portrayed. What does it signify if each hair in the eyebrow is there, each small blemish copied exactly, if the artist has failed to convey the characteristics of the mind—the emotions of the heart—to express to us what she was? On her noble, candid brow, you could read the greatness of Duchess Claudia's soul. The kindness of her heart spoke in her beaming eyes and gentle lips. What is there of herself in yonder stiff, cold representation of her? There is nothing here to distinguish her from the wife of any common citizen. She might be some abbess, rather than the exalted, the magnanimous Claudia."

The bystanders were struck dumb by this outburst.

"But even if the portrait falls short, the lines beneath it have the merit it lacks," said Gravenegger.

"The lines are worse than the portrait."

"Impossible! why they are by our Laurente!" cried Luniati.

"So much the worse for him, then! He has certainly not earned his laurels in this instance. Indeed, the authorship is easily recognised. The Duchess had little relish for his versification, it is hard that he should have been chosen to immortalise her."

"But to what do you take exception, then?"

"Claudia Felicitas de'Medici, at least deserved that she should be lauded in an original couplet."

"What do you mean-how original?"

"This is a plagiarism. If you should ever meet with those lines eulogising Gustavus Adolphus, which have been placed beneath his portrait, you will find that the idea here is stolen from them, reproduced almost verbatum. If the original is poor the plagiarism is stupid. The world is challenged, in the one, to match the Swedish King, the whole universe is defied to equal the character of Duchess Claudia. She herself would have been the last to claim a supremacy which placed her even above the Sovereign of the Universe, the King of kings. I call any verse stupid, too, which can be made to express something diametrically opposed to its intention by the mere verbal alteration of two-epithets.

"How? by changing two words, you say?"

"Yes—I will exemplify it now," said Biener. He drew forth a small note book, wrote down a few lines, and then handed them to Gröbner.

"True!—most true—just listen, gentlemen, and know what a shrewd critic his Excellency is!

"Claudia! to Hapsburg, to Medici akin,
The artist can but paint thy hideous face;
Could he thine odious character unfold
The Universe its match would not disclose."

A laugh went round, and Vollmar exchanged a rapid but very significant glance with the Jesuit. Something momentous had happened. Words had been written that might never be recalled.

"His Excellency sees both portrait and verses in a strange light, still, it may be well to mention the thing to his Highness," said the Jesuit, "but now we must give our thoughts to graver matters—be seated, gentlemen, Count Ferrari has some important statements to make to us."

As they drew their chairs to the table, Biener said in an undertone to his neighbour, Gröbner,

"Mark my words, if this proves to be a very serious communication it will need translation."

Ferrari turned the pages of a document placed before him; he made one or two ineffectual attempts to read it; at last he was obliged to say, as he glanced round the table.

"Gentlemen, I regret to find I am so hoarse that I can scarcely make myself audible. Your climate, here, is very trying to southern throats, may I suggest that we should ask Father Gravenegger, who is quite as conversant with the matter in question as I am myself, to make this statement to you, in my place?"

"If no one dissents, I am quite prepared to act on Count Ferrari's suggestion," said the priest with an assenting smile. All heads were bowed in acquiescence, though a little ironical smile played about the corners of Biener's mouth. Without appearing to observe this, Gravenegger proceeded,

"This document is a petition from certain inhabitants

of the Lower Innthal. They would call our attention, more especially, to the terms of the convention, recently entered into between the Emperor and the German Princes on the one side, and the French and Swedish sovereigns on the other. Proclaiming themselves of the Lutheran faith, our petitioners claim, on the plea of the said Convention, that they shall be at liberty to hold the new doctrines openly. Previously to submitting this document to his Highness's consideration, Count Ferrari desires to know what is the dictum of the Privy Council on the subject. As State Chancellor I request his Excellency, Dr. Wilhelm Biener, to give us his opinions in the first instance."

"I agree with Count Ferrari in considering the question a very grave and important one," said Biener "and yet I can scarcely recognise its great difficulty. The law is plain, the question is clear and straightforward. No doubt can exist as to the applicability of the law to the situation of these people.

"The recent convention grants to the inhabitants of all German lands, a restoration of all those rights and privileges which they enjoyed before the year 1624. It grants them freedom to profess and exercise what religious belief they may choose.

"The Lutheran body claims to have had many adherents in the Tyrol previous to that year, these persons may justly demand to have freedom of choice restored to them."

"I dissent from this opinion, for I cannot grant the Chancellor's premises;" said Vollmar, "it is quite erroneous to state that previous to the year 1624 any indulgence was shewn to the Lutheran heresy in this country. Severe penalties were inflicted on all professing heretical opinions during the reign of Arch-Duke Ferdinand. Arch-Duke Leopold enacted the same

penalties, and had them carried out rigorously. The present petitioners can ground no claim on the mere fact of their having held secret and unlawful meetings. The toleration granted by the recent Convention does not apply in any degree to such persons. Let them, then, either return to the bosom of the Church, or avail themselves of our gracious permission to quit this land altogether."

"That last would indeed be a sad solution of their difficulty—a terrible evil for our land!" cried Biener. "The man who holds to his religious belief, deeming it so sacred that he is ready to forsake home and fatherland, goods and possessions, for its sake, is a brave man; I would not lightly seek to drive such a subject from our territories. It is not the mere letter of the law, it is the spirit, the intention, that should be considered. Subsequently to 1624, the Emperor and the League were supreme. In all German States the professors of the new doctrines were persecuted and oppressed by their Catholic rulers; so it would have been still, if Sweden had not intervened. If we are to understand the new treaty in the sense Chancellor Vollmar would indicate, the Lutherans, all the world over, remain in exactly the same position now as before the Convention was signed; whereas, its precise object is to confer new privileges. If the former status quo had been satisfactory, we should have needed no new Convention. The Chancellor's interpretation of the Convention, then, is contrary to its intention, and therefore unstatesmanlike."

"It appears to me, that no law ought to be carried into effect otherwise than expediency may warrant" said Gravenegger.

"The law must be acted upon logically, there can be but one just interpretation of any law," cried Biener impatiently. "Allow me once more to remind you, most

reverend father, that our treaties are not usually signed in order that they may bear a twofold significance, and so become illusory!"

"It is quite useless to wrangle about interpretations," said Gravenegger quietly, "Chancellor Vollmar, one of the framers of this very Convention, being present we have not far to go for an explanation of its meaning."

"Good!—Let him explain it then," said Biener. "Yet I would compress the whole matter at issue into one question,—Do the Powers wish to confer on the professors of the new faith privileges which they have hitherto never enjoyed."

"Certainly they do," said Vollmar, rather reluctantly.

"Good! Then we need to know nothing further; the intention of the convening parties is the gist of the whole contract; we can sanction no proceeding that contravenes that intention."

"I must be permitted a word in denial of this," said Vollmar, "this is not a case in which intention can go for anything; we have to consider, on grounds of expediency only, how the thing is likely to work. The Great Powers must have freedom to interpret matters as they think fit. Their supremacy must not be questioned—their powers limited—they may stipulate——"

"And these stipulations they would impose as if they were laws!" cried Biener indignantly, "Exceptions would be the rule—When the laws admit of none, no human being can legally make such exceptions."

"The Great Powers are, then, to be subject to pressure from without? are to be the slaves of some cccult force," sneered Vollmar.

"Most certainly they are! If the present Convention does not satisfy them, let them summon another. Let them speak out manfully and confess 'this or that, I did not understand, I never meant to carry out' the

matter will then have to be put to the arbitrament of the sword again."

"Renew hostilities, and on such slight grounds?" said Gravenegger, shrugging his shoulders, "The Lutheran heresy scarcely knows how warm an advocate it possesses in the Catholic Chancellor of a Catholic Country."

"I do not myself held by the Lutheran doctrines; but, be my creed what it may, I hope I shall always be a friend to equality, and to justice. Did I, however, favour the new belief it might serve to equalise matters in some degree here. Your Reverence must appreciate the zeal with which some of your friends of the Privy Council seek to hunt down heretics. Converts, it is said, are always the most bitter opponents of their forsaken creed. We have a proof of this amongst us now."

Biener looked full at Vollmar as he spoke; the latter changed countenance, but he managed to say with seeming indifference, "Your's seems to me to be the Utopian statesmanship of a mere adventurer."

"An honest one at all events!"

"Is it dishonest to be consistent to one's belief, to try to carry out our scheme of policy with conscientious vigour?"

"I call it dishonest to oppress and persecute any fellow being. You, Herr Vollmar, former professor of Belles-lettres and Rhetoric, may find it easy to acquit your conscience of any twinges, and diverge as widely from your motto, 'Strive after the highest!' as suits your purpose. For my part I think the soil that grows the plant called *mental reservation* is barren and unfruitful; a mere swamp."

Gravenegger glanced at Vollmar, who was about to make a violent retort. With an effort at composure, Vollmar then said—

"When personalities are resorted to, arguments must be weak or wanting. You shall answer to me some day for your injurious remarks, Dr. Biener!"

"This moment, if you choose!"

"I cannot allow any private matters to interfere with affairs of State. We seem to forget that urgent public questions await our attention while we wrangle about trifles. President Schmaus, what do you say on this important subject?"

"My opinion is," said Schmaus, "that we should be ruled by the dictum of the Imperial Senate. What seems good to the Emperor may surely suffice for

us."

"I would certainly refuse to grant any toleration," said Gröbner. "Our mountains here have hitherto been the stronghold of the ancient faith. Let others regard heretics as they may, we, in the Tyrol, must hold fast to the one true and infallible church."

"In Italy no other is acknowledged," said Luinati, "we have one church only, I cannot see why more should be demanded by Germany."

"If we begin by concession who can tell where we may end?" said Ferrari, "who can say but that the very Jews may, in time, demand to be treated as on an equality with Christians."

"We are almost unanimous then, in our decision." said Gravenegger "I regret that the state of my health does not permit me to express all that I should like to say on this most momentous question. One thing, however, I feel bound to state. The Great Powers may suppose this peace to be concluded, yet the Church has by no means ratified it. The Holy Father has, indeed, emphatically pronounced against it, and it appears to me, that all faithful sons of the Church ought to obey its. Head; they cannot wink at a betrayal of his supremacy,

which may, indeed, be termed little less than blasphemous."

"Your sentiments are plain, and I hear them enunciated in all their sincerity for the first time" said Biener. "May I ask you how you reconcile this obedience to the Church with your duties as citizens, as law abiding persons?"

"We are told to fear God more than man," said the priest. Biener rose and pushed back his chair hastily—then he exclaimed,

"Then you throw off the mask! You call this rendering unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's? I am so completely in a minority, however, that all protests are useless! Yet one thing I would say before we separate, you may as well spare yourselves and the Privy Council the form of sitting uselessly. You may as well apply directly to the Jesuit College in future, when any questions of State are under discussion. You can convey its decisions to his Highness, that will suffice."

He turned to leave the room and the rest formed themselves into knots, looking after him moodily.

Marello had just whispered a few words in the President's ear. Schmaus shrugged his shoulders dubiously, then, apparently thinking of an expedient, he rose and hastened after Biener. When he had caught him up, he said, "Pardon me, Excellency, if I detain you a moment. I think you have forgotten that the dues you pay us on your brew-house have been in arrears now for some time. The sum you owe us must amount to five thousand gulden at least. Our coffers are empty, just now, I am sure to a man of your wealth such a sum seems a trifle. Can you make it convenient to pay us without any further delay?"

Biener laughed, "and my salary is over due also; six months in arrears, Mr. President, at least. Mine

is a very simple financial system, you do not pay me, I do not pay you, you can set down the one against the other. We each keep our money in our pockets."

"But you would do me an especial favour. Nay, you

would oblige his Highness himself, if you-"

"And for once in my life receive the thanks of the Exchequer? No! Mr. President, I must decline to pay you anything whatever."

"Then we must have recourse to legal proceedings. You will not like that, you will find!" cried Schmaus, an angre flush rising to his forshead

an angry flush rising to his forehead.

"You may do as you like," said Biener quietly. When he had left them the rest broke into loud expressions of indignation and surprise.

"A sad instance, indeed," said the priest, "the Lord deprives a man of his reason in order to punish his

.arrogance and overbearing conceit."

"But are we to submit quietly to this arrogance of his? We are agreed in all things. This man alone opposes us. Did you notice, he scarcely took the trouble to conceal his heretical tendencies? He must be dismissed," said Gröbner.

"Yes—yes he must be got out of office!" they all exclaimed.

"His dismissal might easily have been compassed a few weeks ago," added Ferrari, "The Duke was at that time totally averse to him. Since the death of the Duchess Mother, however, I observe a great change in his Highness's sentiments about Biener; he is again in favour."

"A trifle may serve to bring about the reaction nevertheless," said Vollmar.

"As how?"

"If Biener's remarks about the portrait were repeated in a judicious manner—?"

"How do you mean?"

"Leave that to me. I am the person most aggrieved, I must have ample satisfaction; the means I will use to compass this will serve the general cause equally well; may I ask you to trust to me, and to co-operate?".

"In what way?"

"First, observe the most profound silence on the subject of the portrait, yet, in so far as it is prudent, let those lines of Biener's get abroad."

"Well-what next?"

"That you shall hear to-night. My cousin here, President Schmaus, invites us to a slight repast to assist in the discussion and further organisation of the matter."

During this interchange of words, the Jesuit had risen; pressing his hand to his side, while a look of suffering contracted his features, he went towards the door accompanied by Vollmar.

"I shall not attend your symposium to-night," he said, "even if my cloth permitted it, my health forbids. You must detail your scheme, to me, more at large. What is it that you think of doing?"

Vollmar approached his lips to the priest's ear, and said a few words in a whisper.

Gravenegger smiled and bent his head.

"Admirably contrived!" he said "yes—that must bring it about."

"I appreciate your approval all the more, because you are the only human being living in whom I mean to confide—to confide fully. The rest must only know as much as we may think it expedient to tell them—only enough to satisfy them. You and I hold Biener's fate in our hands. You see, I am giving you a further proof of my confidence and good will. When am I to receive my recompense? When are those documents to be in my possession?"

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"Soon—Go on as you are doing for yet a little while-longer. Do not fear but that you will one day reap the reward of your faithful service. Meantime I will repay confidence with confidence; you shall have some insight into my larger projects. Come to me to morrow morning, I will then unfold them to you; you shall see into my mind more fully."

For a minute he stood gazing earnestly into space, his wan face seemed to be lighted up as if by some lamp within. "The Great Powers are at present in a state of collapse, their subjects are exhausted by the long war. They are literally fainting by the wayside after the great strain put upon them. The church may seem to casual observers to be quiescent, but it is not so; obstacles present only new victories to her! It is now that she must assert her supremacy, win back all her former power; until she is paramount, no healing, no salvation, can be hoped for. The great work is about to begin, the Tyrol must lead the van."

"A mighty prospect—all success attend you!—May we soon see you arrayed in purple and wielding the pastoral crook!"

"I covet no personal honours," said Gravenegger with affected humility, "What Heaven may bestow, we poor mortals are bound to receive meekly, gratefully; but I covet nought."

As the Jesuit turned away, Schmaus came up angrily and seized Vollmar by the arm,

"I want to know what you mean by it?" he cried. "How do you dare to invite guests to my table without my consent or concurrence?"

"I will meet all the costs," replied Vollmar contemptuously, "that is all you need to know for the present. See to it that you provide good meat and better drink for our entertainment, you need trouble yourself about nothing else for the present; unless, indeed, you can hit upon some plan to force Biener into payment of his debts. However, the beer-money will serve as well as anything else to open the campaign with."

"I can't forget that I owe the Chancellor a good turn.

—I may go with you to a certain extent; you are not to suppose I would go all lengths, however."

"Folly!" exclaimed Vollmar. "You count it a good turn to fling a benefit at your head, just to shew his own arrogance. Have you forgotten how often he has made merry at your expense? And what other course is left open to you, may I ask, but to cast in your lot with ours? Are you not body and soul in my power? Take my advice then, and help us, with a good grace, to scotch this venemous snake."

In spite of the chilliness of the atmosphere, great drops were standing on the brow of the fat President; he could scarcely bring himself to give in to this betrayal of the man he had once professed to honour and admire, without a protest.

All of a sudden, cries were heard—a sound of hurrying footsteps. A man rushed up the stairs and presented himself to their astonished gaze calling out, "Excellency! Excellency! For God's sake, come! He is dying—dying! Oh! help—help—"

" Who is dying?"

"The Holy Father! He lies at the foot of the stairs; he seems to be in some kind of fit——"

When the two had hastened down to the foot of the great marble staircase, they did indeed behold Gravenegger, lying there motionless; his head resting on the lowest step as it might have lain on a pillow—He was white and livid, his eyes wide and staring. They were glazing fast, for life and light were extinguished for ever. Blood was oozing from his half open lips, blood which

had bedabbled his breast, and was slowly trickling down on the marble on which he lay.

Vollmar gazed, horror struck, upon the senseless clay which, but a short minute ago, had been stirred by such mighty ambitions—"So this is the purple robe I foretold thee!" he murmured to himself—"A warning to never defer even for a day what we have planned to do——"For long he stood there, while the doctors came and vainly tried to resuscitate the cold body. His thoughts were busied, how strangely busied! Only two men had known that fatal secret, only two men had had it in their power to ruin him. By a lucky chance, one lay there at his feet, dead—innocuous! The other was surely rushing on his fate; he soon would be delivered from his dread of Biener. What dazzling prospects then opened on his mental vision!

Above all things now, however, he must hasten to secure those damning proofs. The Jesuit's sudden death gave him this long coveted opportunity, and no time must be wasted. He said to Schmaus "See that everything is creditably arranged for the evening's entertainment, I am summoned away," then he hastened, with all speed, to the room formerly occupied by Gravenegger.

The Jesuit's apartment was in the inner quadrangle of the Palace. Vollmar had counted on finding it exactly as the dead man had left it; but when he opened the door, he saw, to his dismay, that he came too late.

Even the smallest articles of furniture had already been removed, the room was utterly bare—He saw that the chest used for keeping papers in was gone! He could scarcely credit it; but so it was. As he stood there in speechless indignation, he observed old Brother Felix in a dark corner, busied in putting together a few remaining trifles, such as crosses, rosaries and little pictures which had belonged to the dead man.

"What are you doing there?" he demanded of the poor old man. "What have you done with the chest in which Father Gravenegger kept his papers?"

"The chest? It is now at the Jesuit College, I carried it there myself, but just now."

"Carried it? a heavy chest like that? How can you have done that in these few minutes?"

The monk looked up quietly and innocently, into the face of his questioner. A little smile flickered over his wasted features.

"The Reverend Father," he said, "has always charged me to see to this, should any thus sad event occur suddenly. I happened to pass just as he breathed his last; I hastened hither to fulfil his orders. He has told me, often and often, that in case of his sudden death I must only think how I could convey his papers with the greatest speed to the Rector at the College. I did this. The chest was not nearly so heavy as you might imagine. It was divided inside into several compartments each one of which was quite light to carry."

Vollmar gnawed his lips until they bled, in his effort to restrain his passion. Here then were all his hopes dashed to the ground!

"Are you aware that you are playing a dangerous game, my good brother?" he said presently. "There are important papers belonging to his Highness in that box; the College has no possible right to rob him of them."

"I know nothing about that; if it be as your Excellency states, no doubt the Rector will restore the Duke's property to him as soon as he has examined it; I only did my duty. His Reverence knew full well that birds of prey might swoop down on his effects as soon as he had left them—"

"And the College thought it well to carry off the whole carcase for its own share of the spoil? Let them

see to it that they have not exceeded their privileges, though! I am going to his Highness now, and you may be sure of this, that I shall inform him of the robbery that has been committed, and request him to act upon the knowledge promptly."

Brother Felix had collected all the trifles left; now he

seemed desirous to lock up the room.

"It is not my affair," he once more repeated. "The Rector knows very well how to defend the rights of his College and Order, my duty is simply to obey my superiors."

As he spoke, the old monk walked out of the chamber. Vollmar, however reluctantly, felt himself constrained to follow. He saw the door locked and his hopes once more frustrated, with a rage that was all the more bitter because it had, perforce, to be concealed.

The young Duchess Anna paced her apartments with a fevered and nervous step. From time to time she paused by the windows, and gazed out upon the frosty starlit heavens. Resuming her weary tread, she presently stopped before the portrait of her young husband, which hung over the fireplace, and gazed at it till she could no longer see it through her gathering tears.

"Ah, Barbarina," she cried, as her faithful attendant came into the room, "here thou art at last! Is everything in readiness?"

"If I loved your Highness less, I would scarcely have done so much, for, well I know, it will all be in vain."

"Thou incorrigible girl!--Now look at me, for I fear I have ruined all thy handiwork."

The waiting-maid busied herself in re-arranging the soft tresses of her mistress's hair, murmuring,

"Incorrigible? but that is what her Highness is herself. No experience can make her wise."

"Fie, girl! 'Tis not to be given up lightly, what is more than my life to me. I was at one time nearly mad, I had even threatened to leave my husband; but our beloved mother, Duchess Claudia, showed me how to be patient. If she could but have been spared to me! But I will constrain myself, my poor aching heart can bear its pain, my husband shall never hear one reproachful word from my lips again. He shall never even see one reproachful look in my eyes. My long suffering will in the end prevail, it will melt his heart; he will love me yet, some day! Now, to-night, we have got together all that he likes best. Our little festival must please him. You will see, Barbara, I will creep into his heart yet!"

"If he comes—your Highness."

"He will come, he will come!" cried the poor young creature springing to her feet, "I have a conviction, deep down in my heart, that I shall win him yet, Barbarina! Thou art a most dismal thing!—poor Barbarina—good Barbarina!—I won't have anything more to do with thee!" As she spoke she ran into the adjoining room; the faithful girl sighed and slowly shook her head, looking lovingly after her.

At that very hour another lady expected a visit from Duke Ferdinand. A knock, repeated several times at the door of the beautiful Lucia's apartment, had not been responded to; at last the door was cautiously opened and a man's head was thrust in. After peering all round the luxurious tent-like chamber, filled with everything that was costly and magnificent, Marello, for it was he, stole in with a cat-like tread. The circular walls were draped with some bright silken fabric, and the soft light of a lamp, shaded with rose coloured glass, was shed on deep divans, piles of embroidered cushions and thick eastern rugs. A morsel of white, lying on one of these dark rugs, caught Marello's lynx eye. He snatched it

hastily, and lost no time in untwisting a small written scroll and making himself master of its contents. With a diabolical grin he then concealed it in an inner pocket.

No sooner had he effected this, than Lucia, lifting a curtain, stood before him, dressed fantastically in eastern fashion. Her loose robe of gauzy blue stuff, stiff with silver embroidery, was so draped as to display more than to conceal her beautiful form.

When she beheld who was there she cried imperiously. "What dost thou want? How did'st thou find entrance here? Ah! I remember, I neglected to fasten the door. Dost thou come to announce his Highness?" He looked at her half mockingly, half admiringly,

"And am I never supposed to come on my own account then?" he said familiarly, "Am I to be only a shadow, a thing to announce other folks for evermore?"

She flung herself impatiently on a couch. "Lucia," he went on, how proud thou art grown! Who would ever have guessed, when we two were boy and girl, playing together under the arches of the Coliseum, that the Vetturino's little daughter would some day be transformed into such a splendid lady as this!"

"What is the meaning of all that?" she said haughtily, drawing away as he approached her.

"I would hold a mirror up before this magnificent peacock and that would show her that she has a pair of ugly feet with all her gay plumage. Who is it thou hast to thank, for all this grandeur, too? 'Tis true, thou had'st thine own bright eyes to thank for it, that the old Abbé picked thee up out of the gutter, and got thee taught to sing; yet had'st thou not fallen in with an old friend again, eyes and voice might have done little enough for thee, I can tell thee. At Court, here, Marello, the Barber's boy, has been thy best friend; and now, forsooth, thou would'st try to turn up thy little nose at him!

"Don't be so cross, I do know that I owe thee a good turn."

"Well then!" he cried eagerly "wilt thou pay me? Lucia! listen to me at all events. My passion for thee is driving me mad, canst thou not give me a little hope?"

"Shameless fellow!—but I know how to rid myself of thee—I will not be insulted!"

"Indeed? How so pray?" he said, coming closer to her, "complain to the Duke, I suppose? First though, find a way to the Duke's ear without Marello's help! If I like I can prevent your ever setting eyes on his Highness again. He is a boy, weak and changeable; if I hadn't contrived well for thee he would have forgotten thee long ago. He may be bewitched by thee, but, depend upon it he has many a twinge of conscience. This very evening the Duchess has such a grand entertainment for him—!"

"Marello, I expect to see his Highness every moment—"
"The Duchess is expecting him too. She has music, acting,—every !thing that she knows he likes best."

"Ahi me! But art thou quite assured of this?"

"Positive, and she's clever enough to succeed too if I don't intercede for thee. I can turn the scale."

She came up to him, looking much agitated; in a persuasive voice she exclaimed, "Marello! thou can'st never desert thine old playfellow? Ask what thou wilt of me, but don't let him go to her to-night!"

He crept close up to her, he fixed his eyes on her beautiful face; then he whispered,

"Marry me."

She shrank away in uncontrollable disgust.

"Begone!" she cried "Do thy worst, but never let mesee thy horrible face again!" She seized a mantle and wrapped a scarf round her head as if preparing to go out. Marello's eyes literally blazed with rage.

"So that is what is in the wind!" he hissed.

"I am going to seek the Duke. I can find him without help. I will tell him all; he will rid me of thy horrible persecution. What will become of thee then?"

"He will send me to the devil; but not alone, my lady! I have a little story to tell the Duke also! I will shew him a certain twisted scroll—" every drop of blood forsook the wretched woman's cheek—"a note from a certain yeoman of the guard who finds favour in the eyes of a fair lady we are acquainted with—a note that tells of meetings,—rendezvous. What will the Duke say to that, I wonder?"

"I am ruined!" she murmured, sinking on a couch, and burying her face in the cushions.

"Not lost if thou wilt but be wise," he whispered, "If I promise thee that the Duke spends this evening here, instead of with his wife, wilt thou do as I desire thee?"

His evil face was bending over her, his eyes had a menacing gleam in them. She almost lost consciousness so great was the horror and revulsion with which he filled her; but at last her lips formed themselves into a "yes," though her eyes were averted from him; then she motioned despairingly to him to leave her.

"A pleasant way to consent; yet it must, I suppose, serve my turn," he said, bitterly. "Don't suppose you are going to cheat me, though, Lucia. I will not part with my weapon till the fight is over, the victory won. Farewell, loveliest of thy sex! Next time we meet I expect to find thee in a better humour!"

When she was left alone the miserable creature sank down on the ground; hiding her face in her hands she burst into a passion of weeping.

One wild wintry evening Chancellor Biener sat writing in his study. The wind raged and moaned in all the turrets of the Büchsenhaus, and in the old pine trees surrounding it; driving thick flakes of snow against the window panes. Outside, nothing could be seen but the blinding snow, or heard but the roaring wind. A gloom hung over the Chancellor; he laid down his pen, and let his thoughts go back to the days when hope was strong within him, life full of promise. He was quite alone, for Elizabeth, yielding to some unhappy impulse that had arisen within her on the day of Claudia's funeral, now often absented herself from him just at that twilight hour which formerly she was wont to beguile with her loving words, her tender smiles.

A loud knock suddenly aroused the Chancellor from his sad reflections. The door opened, and a servant in the gorgeous livery of the royal household came in and delivered a missive to him.

He broke the seals, and, involuntarily, a loud exclamation broke from his lips. Turning to the man he said "My friend, go down and say that I desired thee to have a measure of wine. There was no such urgent haste that thou need'st have been sent out in rough weather like this. This letter shall be answered at once, thou can'st wait, and carry back my reply to his Highness, instantly."

As soon as the man was gone he sank back wearily in his chair and read through once more, from beginning to end, the letter he had just received.

His eyes had not deceived him, the words were plain and legible enough—Long as he might have been anticipating some such announcement he was shaken, by it to the very soul. To convince himself that he was not deceived he read aloud one or two phrases 'honourable' 'much esteemed' 'thinking it well, in our great consideration for you, to relieve you of the cares of office." "So that is how they put it! consideration? Why does not the very paper blush for the lie it records! 'thanks for long and faithful service,' Fitting thanks! 'we avail ourselves of this opportunity of subscribing ourselves your devoted and most gracious, Ferdinand Karl.'

He threw down the letter indignantly, "They have succeeded," he cried, "I am dismissed like some defaulting lackey. Such are my thanks! Oh, Claudia! Claudia! Can'st thou behold what thou hast done? But for thee I might have laid down my office, with honour, with dignity. This bitter disgrace would have been spared me—these false mocking words—Good now, my lord Duke! you think I can make no response? That happy delusion I will dispel! I will reply, and this moment too."

He dashed off a few lines, standing by the table; folded and addressed the letter and was about to seal it with his signet, when his wife rushed into the room, pale and agitated.

"A royal messenger here? My husband, for God's sake say what this means!" she cried,

"Thou can'st read it," he said gently, giving her the royal missive. She read it hurriedly; then, bursting into tears, she covered her face with her hands and sobbed,

"Dismissed! replaced!"

"We have lived in the sunshine long enough, a storm is coming, my dear," he said. He took her into his arms; she clung to him wildly, holding him fast in her embrace,

"My best—my dearest," she cried "to be so wounded by them! Thy long, zealous, service rewarded thus—And yet—don't be angry—I can't but feel glad that thou may'st now be more free from care, from that heavy work. Thou wilt now be entirely mine, thou wilt belong to thy family only—The storm has burst; we shall see the blue sky soon. All the clouds will be driven away. My husband! Have I ever failed in my love and duty to thee? If I have, the future shall atone for it. Peace and joy will now be ours for ever!"

He looked kindly but sadly into her face "Thou seest this with a woman's eyes," he said, "but I am a man—a man in all the strength and vigour of life. I need no rest; what I want is work. I had much to do, to complete—I would so gladly have finished all that I had planned for the welfare of this land. How am I to stand by and see them trample ruthlessly under foot the result of years of thought and labour? Yet if it had been of my own seeking I might have better borne to quit my life of active work, might even have taken comfort in some rural occupation, some other work. But to be so insulted, so needlessly humiliated! Cast away like the lees from the wine-press—It is not to be borne!"

"Yes—yes, oh yes! I know it all" she cried, clinging closer to him,—"but soon thou wilt look at it more calmly. Thou wilt rise above it all, thou wilt only rejoice to be free—But, what is this? thou hast written—?"

"My answer to the Duke."

She opened and read as follows, "Most Serene Highness, I have received with submission a condescending royal letter depriving me of the office of State Chancellor to my Sovereign. I had filled that office for many years; I am thankful to be thus released from it. I never voluntarily sought office; it was with some reluctance that I acceded to the wishes of the Emperor and of your Highness's late father and became State Chancellor. More than once I have besought your Highness's guardians to let me resign it—"

"Oh Biener, my husband! Can'st thou seriously think of sending his Highness such a letter as this?" she asked anxiously, "this tone of mortification is not worthy of you—besides, it will but widen the breach."

"The breach is wide; there is a gulf yawning now between us that can never again be bridged over."

"It may—it may! Do not, I beseech thee, cast away all chance of reconciliation by thine own rash deed! Do not send this letter. Heat, anger, are betrayed in every word of it. It is beneath thy dignity to send such a letter as this."

"I am resolved to send it, do not think to stop me."
"Wait, at least, till the morning. If thou art then still of the same mind I promise not to try to hinder thee—Let me only send away the man now!"

Biener held her back as she was leaving the room to dismiss the messenger, "He takes this for my reply, and no other will I write," he said, opening the door.

"Biener! by all that is dear to thee, by the memory of Claudia, I beseech of thee, do not send this dreadful letter."

"If Claudia herself were standing there, in all the glory of her immortality, to her I would say the same I now say to thee—What I predicted has come to pass—. Now I am free!"

"Can my tears, my prayers, move thee so little, Biener! now I know how little thou must love me!"

"I do love thee; ask what else thou wilt, I will not refuse it; but this one thing must not be demanded of me. I will not see myself degraded from a post of honour and usefulness without one word of protest. I must act consistently; they must not believe me satisfied with this poor pretence at courtesy, veiling deep insult, which has been flung at my head."

The servant was summoned, Biener handed him the

letter; then, returning to his wife as she lay on a couch half fainting, "Elizabeth," he said, "my love! Thy sweet predictions of peace and happiness shall be fulfilled if I can help thee to fulfil them. Try to be consoled, my child! Believe that I have but discharged my duty to Ferdinand in speaking my mind as I have done. He is compassed about by flatterers, he seldom hears a true or honest word. Let him for once listen to the voice of a man, of the Ex-Chancellor of the Tyrol!"

CHAPTER XV.

MARS AND VENUS.

ATE as was the hour, the Rennplatz before the Palace was filled with a dense crowd. Pans of flaring pitch, placed between the great trees of the avenue, turned night into day, casting a bright light upon the gorgeous uniforms of the yeomen lining the place to keep a passage free for the transit of carriages. An eager throng pressed on them each moment to see some gay equipage roll past, and discharge its occupants at the new riding school, whose windows streamed with light, while strains of music might be heard from time to time from behind its curtained doorways.

A buzz of voices was audible as the light flickered on the eager faces, for there was much to talk of. The feasting, jousting, and rejoicings had culminated that morning in the betrothal of the Duke's eldest sister, Clara Isabel, to Duke Charles of Mantua and Montferrat. One grand concluding pageant was now about to be shown to the strangers, so that they might depart duly impressed with the splendour of the Tyrolese Court.

Ferrari and Vollmar stood by a window looking on the courtyard. The new State Chancellor wore Biener's chain and badge of office over his black velvet doublet; yet he looked somewhat perturbed and ill at ease, lending an inattentive ear to his companion's comments on the gay scene below.

"Here comes masque number two," said Ferrari, as a gay strain of music reached their ears; "Venus as she



rises from the foam of ocean encircled by her nymphs. Observe, the oars propelling her car are draped with a thin glittering stuff to imitate water; the light plays on it in rainbows. The whole of our corps de ballet has been put into requisition to play the nymphs and tritons Court of the Queen of Ocean."

"Who represents the goddess herself?"

"Our premiere danseuse. Another person was expected to have assumed the character; but she is not forthcoming, apparently."

"What is the Masque meant to symbolise?"

"Venus represents the bride, Mars the bridegroom. The champions of Venus are dressed in blue and silver, those of Mars in scarlet and gold. The Duke himself leads his sister's followers; Count Fugger those of Mars. They are to meet and tilt, then follows a general assault at arms, each thrust, each gambade, made in time to music.—It is a revival of a Roman pageant.—Suddenly the goddess of Fame appears, commands that the combat shall cease, and proclaims it fitting that the fairest and the bravest should share the palm and wear it jointly, instead of contending for it. The pair will then be united amidst fireworks, with triumphal music-dancing follows-But your Excellency is not listening!"

"Oh yes-yes, I am indeed; for one moment my attention had strayed perhaps. I have made three attempts to-day to speak with his Highness on matters of great moment, and each attempt has failed."

"You must time your fourth attempt better." said

Ferrari, smiling carelessly.

"But I come by his own appointment. The mining population at Schwatz have struck work—for higher pay, they allege,—but really, in order to unite with the other Lutherans and force us to grant them

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toleration. The revolt is growing in extent and gravity each moment, and the most stringent measures of

repression will have to be adopted."

"You are very new to your office still, Chancellor. You wear it like a tight garment, you must learn to move more freely. Of what use is it to his Highness that he has a State Chancellor at all, if he is to be harassed and annoyed by every little difficulty that arises in the conduct of affairs? In your position I should take the course that seemed best to myself, and trouble the Duke as little as might be about it."

Marello here flung open the door and asked for, "Mr. President Schmaus,"

"He is not here," said Ferrari.

"Has nothing come from him then? No jewels?" demanded the fellow, "His Highness is waiting with great impatience for a packet. Pray let us have it as soon as it arrives."

"Certainly, you shall have it instantly. What is the Duke expecting?"

"A gift which he has ordered for his royal Highness the bridegroom-a collar, enriched with pearls and precious stones. His Highness will ride round the ring, when the jousting is over, carrying this jewel on the point of his lance. When he meets his brother-in-law he will transfer it to the point of his lance. The first goldsmith in Nuremberg has had the order; he is known to have brought the collar last night; his Highness has not received it yet, and here is the hour for the tilting just at hand."

"Strange, unaccountable too!" said Vollmar.

"Strange? I wager you I know the reason of the delay," laughed Ferrari "Our worthy goldsmith would fain receive a little minted gold, before delivering up his finely wrought metal to the Duke—The mystery is easily explained."

"So the privy purse is at a low ebb again? Surely it is only a very few days since the subsidy of three millions, of the thirteen millions France gives us for the cession of the Breisgau and Lorraine, arrived?"

"Three millions! A drop in the ocean, it might serve to stop one hole; the rest of the sieve remains open."

"An ominous comparison! Our treasury and a sieve!"

"If it doesn't please you, I can easily find another. What say you to a spring in the hills, whose waters are diverted into a hundred different channels. If the President doesn't prove himself a conjuror, I fear me we shall have to apply to the Emperor soon."

Footsteps were heard hastily approaching, and Schmaus appeared panting and breathless. He flung his unwieldy bulk into a chair and wiped his streaming face.

"What has tried your wind so severely, cousin?" asked Vollmar.

"I am a lost man!" he said, and he groaned aloud, "Has Biener been here yet?"

"Biener? What are you thinking of? What should bring Biener here, pray?"

"I sent for him. He is the only man who can help us out of this fix; he can get us the collar from that sordid goldsmith, if he chooses!"

"You haven't been begging again from that most overbearing man?"

"Why, what could I do? The collar is to cost eighteen thousand guilden, the very sum the Grisons delegates brought, only yesterday—punctual to the moment—Their subsidy, you know—Well! I thought the two would just balance each other; but judge of my dismay—"

"Well?" cried his two listeners in a breath.

"The money is actually here—I saw it, good bills of exchange on Genoa and Zurich, as good as gold from the mint! And now the blockheads decline to give up a farthing of it, unless their old treaties are restored to them!"

"What treaties?"

"How should I know? Here's the schedule of them—Former treaties between the Tyrol and the Grisons, seized and carried off by Duke Ferdinand in time of war. They demand to have them restored. If the treaties are not handed to these imperative gentlemen by to-morrow morning, they depart for their native valleys, taking with them the beautiful gold fish; and I have incurred the eternal displeasure of his Highness!" Vollmar, who had been reading over the schedule attentively, said; "But why not restore them their old treaties? I can't see how it can affect our interests one way or the other."

"Affect us? No indeed! I would fling their old parchments at their heads fast enough, and trouble nobody about it," cried Schmaus, in a tone of great disgust, "but where are they? Lo and behold you, they are not forthcoming! The only trace of them that can be found is this receipt signed by Biener, acknowledging that he had taken them out of the archives."

"Who? Biener do you say?" cried Vollmar, seizing the paper which Schmaus held in his hand and examining it,1" Yes! It is indeed his signature! what can be the meaning of it?"

"I cannot comprehend it at all, so I have sent to ask him about it, and the Delegates are to come and hear his explanation. If I must suffer, the Duke shall know the reason why!"

"And behold, here come the Delegates! But where is

Biener? He evidently means to befool us," said Ferrari.

"Why, don't you see? This paper makes Biener accountable for the parchments. There's no question of any one else suffering for it," said Vollmar.

Two members of the Swiss Confederation, da Planta and Castleberg, were here announced. As they advanced up the room Schmaus hurried to meet them. "Most noble friends," he said "this is indeed good of you, to acceed so graciously to my request."

"Indeed, it is solely and entirely out of personal regard for you, Mr. President, that we are not at this moment on the road for home," said da Planta, rubbing his hand over his shaggy head.

"Then, gentlemen, you would have been acting with unwise precipitation," said Vollmar. Da Planta looked at him in haughty surprise. Castleberg, touching his white hair, said "When the snow has fallen on the head, and the step waxes slow, we are disposed to act with deliberation; yet there are cases where delay brings dishonour. Now, at this moment, for instance, we feel that every hour that we stay here adds to the insult and injury you would put upon us."

"But we hope to convince you that there is no question of injury, gentlemen."

"You confess at least our request is but a reasonable one, then?" cried da Planta hotly, "It was merely an oversight that we had not, years ago, demanded the restoration of our treaties. Your strange reluctance to give them up looks suspicious, to say the very least of it."

"Here comes a letter that will clear up the whole matter I hope," said Schmaus, taking a packet just then brought in by an attendant. "His Excellency does not mean to come down then?" he asked of the man.

"No," replied this rustic-looking personage, "The Chancellor bade me say that he has retired from his Highness's service. He will only resume it at his Highness's request, or special command."

"The old story!" muttered Vollmar.

"Let us see what Biener says-"

"As regards those parchments, I received them from the keeper of the Archives several years ago, and gave him my receipt for them. I have also in my possession a statement in the hand-writing of my late honoured Mistress, Duchess Claudia, to the effect that she had committed those documents to the flames in her own private apartment, in presence of myself and the reverend fathers Malaspina, and Gravenegger." Schmaus and Vollmar exchanged looks of dismay,

"Come, Câstleberg!" exclaimed da Planta, flushing angrily, "Our business is concluded."

As they turned to quit the room, Vollmar cried, "Gentlemen, can you not perceive that some trick is being played upon us? Let me try to explain."

"That is precisely what we must decline to let you do.

We have no desire to be made dupes of-"

"But I protest against your departing thus," cried Vollmar, who was growing excessively angry, "Just consider what you are doing! We have searched vainly for your treaties; we have every wish to restore them to you. Is there any sort of valid pretext for repudiating your just debts to the Duchy of the Tyrol?"

"Holy Cross of Einsiedel!" cried da Planta, breaking out into fury, "If that is the tone adopted by the Tyrol, I throw your words in your teeth, and declare that it is you who are repudiating your debts to us. You decline to restore our lawful property and try to put us off with an absurd story that the treaties have been burnt. No! Since we find there is not even one honest man

to be found here—not one even, since Biener can lend himself to such a deception—we leave you. But the response to this injury you have put upon us may be a bloody one; rest assured of that, gentlemen."

The delegates quitted the room, with hasty strides, leaving Vollmar, Ferrari and Schmaus in a state little short of despair. The sudden entrance of Ferdinand did not lessen their difficulty.

The young Duke was dressed for appearing in the Masque, and seldom had he looked to greater advantage. He might have been the God Mercury, or some ideal Greek hero, in his gilt mail, golden helmet with its waving white plumes, short tunic, embroidered sandals, and jewelled sword. His tall and elegant figure, clustering fair curls, and bright young face set off the dress admirably.

"How now? Only disturbed looks,—no collar?" he cried, as he looked first at one and then at another. Vollmar took it upon him to be spokesman, he tried to explain the dilemma. Finally he read Biener's letter aloud. Ferdinand, as he listened, became more and more disturbed. When, at last it was ended he flung his sword violently on the table and exclaimed in a tone of intense anger and disgust;

"This is intolerable! This man even yet can baulk me of all I would have! One or other of us must leave this land!"

With an air of profound respect Vollmar approached him and said in a soft insinuating voice,

"Do not call me too bold, your Highness, if I venture to speak candidly. You have only your own kindness to blame for it if this man's arrogance still annoys you! You have not shewn him that you mean to rule in your own dominions!"

"I have dismissed him from office, what more would you have me do?" said Ferdinand moodily.

"I would deprive him of all chance of interfering again in matters of State: I would institute a criminal prosecution against him."

"But on what pretext? It would appear but petty spite in me, I fear. Besides, he may be arrogant, pedantic, meddlesome; but he is, at least, a man of honour. How can he be criminally indicted?"

"The former charges can be revived. Your Highness is perhaps not aware that, even in your late lamented mother's reign, accusations of all kinds had so accumulated against him that he could not avoid a prosecution. This was not carried fully into effect, for in those days Biener was all powerful, the favorite was dreaded by every one.—we see now with what reason too!—The Duchess pronounced him to be innocent, at a Session of the Diet; but the law has not been satisfied. No formal sentence was pronounced by a judge: the inquiry can be resumed at any moment."

"I know, I know; but those are old stories now," said the Duke, with a little reluctance yet much interest.

"But if more recent offences are added, ample proofs adduced? Your Highness has called Biener a man of honour, you will not confess to his treachery, even when it stares you in the face as clearly as now."

Ferdinand made no comment. He looked down thoughtfully. After a short interval Vollmar went on again, "The further inquiry I suggest will, I repeat, afford us all the proofs we need. Biener is astute, you see he declines to give up the treaties. He is keeping them, doubtless, that he may use them for his own advantage ultimately. They are either in the Büchsenhaus, or amongst those papers which, as your Highness

may remember, were first given in charge to Malaspina, then to Gravenegger, and which the Jesuits have just robbed us of so disgracefully."

"I have ordered that they should be instantly given up," cried Ferdinand.

"That order was delivered at the College; but the Jesuits refuse to obey it," said Vollmar.

"They refuse to obey my express commands?"

"They have had the audacity to refer to their spiritual authority over us, they declare themselves accountable to no earthly sovereign—bound only to obey the Pope."

"And has my culpable indulgence led to such daring as this?" cried Ferdinand, springing to his feet, "Well, if they will not comply, they shall have to seek some other home. I will allow no one to remain in my dominions who declines to obey me, and dares to dispute my supremacy. You may inform the Rector that, if he has not, before forty-eight hours, delivered up Gravenegger's papers to us, I will banish every Jesuit from these dominions, will raze their College to the ground and forbid them to set foot here, henceforth and for ever!"

This sudden outburst rejoiced Vollmar; he cried in a hearty tone, "God bless your Highness! This is indeed showing yourself a ruler! I will issue your commands instantly. If only I could persuade you to command the prompt execution of one more act of justice, you might rid yourself of all trouble for the future."

Ferdinand only looked grave; he was silent.

"Well then, I will be plain with your Highness!" Vollmar went on, "Till Biener is incarcerated, till the viper is scotched that preys on your vitals, you will never enjoy any real power or freedom in your own realm." Ferdinand was pacing the room with a dark expression

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on his face; he stopped, and looking keenly at Vollmar, said, "You assert much, Mr. Chancellor."

"And will prove it, too! The Büchsenhaus is the spot from which all disturbances and conspiracies against the rulers of this land emanate. I have not a doubt but that this rising of the Lutherans in Schwatz has been planned there. He pulls the strings, the puppets dance. Why, all those pasquinades and libels, which aim at the destruction of loyalty and law, are penned by him. If your Highness permits me, I can prove it to you."

Ferdinand seemed to waver. He had been tossed about between doubt and belief so far. Growing very

pale, he sank into a chair as if tired.

"Think what you are saying," he said, "If that is true, it is indeed frightful. You know I have offered large rewards for information that can lead to the detection of the author of those squibs. How can I believe them to have been written by my late State Chancellor? A man so trusted by both my parents!"

For a time there was silence; then Vollmar said; "And yet, he is the man who wrote them."

"Impossible! Biener is sarcastic, his wit is keen, his adversaries feel its edge occasionally; I can believe even that he wrote those lines ridiculing you and your colleagues; nay,—I might believe that he had written the lines about myself; but my mother—that couplet on her portrait.—No! I will not believe that he is capable of putting forth such a shameful libel as that. I know how he revered and worshipped her; I know what he was to her. If he is capable of thus villifying her, the cup would overflow—such ingratitude—treachery!"

"Only consent to the investigation, Highness, and I will undertake that proof is forthcoming," replied Vollmar, with icy coldness. "I will bring his own hand-writing to witness that what I tell you is true. After all,

why should you find it so hard to believe him guilty? Did he not owe all his distinctions to the gracious favour of Duke Leopold, Duchess Claudia, and yourself. How did he write to you only lately? How has he repaid your favour?"

Ferdinand winced, as if suddenly touched in a tender

place; then he flushed angrily and cried,

"You are right! Biener is a heartless, ungrateful man. He cares for nothing but making the whole world bend to his imperious will. His tongue spares no one. Why should he not have added that to his other offences? I will retire and think it over: I have no heart left for the masque-indeed, it has begun long since. See that the gift for my brother-in-law is in readiness. You may bring it to me presently with the two orders, I will then sign them. You understand? Both orders!" repeated, as he left them and went into his private apartments. Ferrari hastened to see that the orders were drafted. Vollmar and Schmaus were left The former was radiant with triumph. together. Instantly he began to write diligently. After a time he looked up and caught the dull, but malevolent eyes of Schmaus rivetted upon him.

"Well?" he said, "Now we have gained the very thing we have tried for so long; and there you sit, staring so stupidly and indifferently before you, that, by my word, Biener's name for you wouldn't come amiss!"

Schmaus fidgetted in his chair,—then he said stolidly, "Pray, why should I be so jubilant then? True, I didn't like Biener in old times; but I have had some reason to modify my feelings to him of late years. Now, I want to know what I am going to gain, if I let thee make a tool of me in this matter and turn me against him again? Hast thou not got the place that I ought to have had?"

"As if thou hadst not risen with me! Why, what does it matter who has the title, the honour, if thou hast the substantial benefit of it? I have the responsibility and hard work; thou hast what thou most need'st, money—Depend upon it, as long as thou wilt follow my counsels and stick by me, there need be no lack of the wherewithal for all thy luxuries and indulgences. Perhaps indeed, thou dost prefer to be poor——"

The overgrown wretch turned away with a shudder. Presently he remarked, "Well, that's all very fine; but how are we to get possession of that jewelled collar, I should like to know?"

"That's just what must be done, though, and as fast as possible, too."

"I can't see any way for it but Abraham May. He's generally to be found in these regions. To-day, he's chary of putting in an appearance, it would seem."

Vollmar glanced towards the door. He saw a white head protruded and then withdrawn. "Lupus in fabula," he remarked, "Come in, Abraham! the man who brings us money, needn't be shy of showing himself here!"

"God's wonder! how should I have any money?" said the old Jew, as he came towards them, plucking at his long beard. "Have not my brother and I given you all the gold we had in the world! All our people have been squeezed for it too. Are we to go on ploughing and labouring the fields for fine gentlemen to reap the harvest, for ever? We want our interest. That is our good crop. If we sow on the stones, can we expect any return for it, my noble gentlemen?"

"Drop all those preliminaries, Abraham," said Schmaus "We hav'nt time for them just now; and be satisfied to turn over your fifty per cent—aye, even your hundred—while you are sleeping. Hav'nt you a

mortgage on our Salt Mines at Hall? What more would you have?"

Abraham stroked his beard thoughtfully—then he said, "But what do folks tell you? Did not the mountains here bear great wealth of gold and silver in the old time, and did it not all vanish away, even as a grain of dust is blown off a man's hand. How do I know but that the salt may all go away some day just the same? The miners are on strike too, so I hear, at Schwatz; if the lads at Hall join them, what becomes of my mortgage then? A bad investment, I tell you Mr. President,—a bad investment!"

"Waste no more words on the Jew" said Vollmar, taking up his hat as if to go, "I will see the goldsmith myself: very likely he may give me the collar on my own personal security. I can shew landed property to double that amount. We must not lose a chance like this. The order for Biener's impugnment must be signed this evening, or not at all."

Abraham had shrugged his shoulders; he was about to depart, when Biener's name caught his ear. "The accusation against whom did you say?" he asked.

"Well, I suppose the thing will soon be public enough. I allude to the warrant for a criminal prosecution against the late State Chancellor. The Duke signs it, on condition we take him the collar at once."

"Aye!—Criminal? That sounds well! 'Twill be a hanging matter doubtless? The proud over-bearing man with his 'that is the law!'—Yes, the law may cost him his life yet."—Vollmar and Schmaus glanced at each other, Abraham went on, as if to himself,

"Criminal accusation? They're to get his Highness to sign it when they take him the collar?—My good gentlemen, I have been thinking this matter over—Why should our worthy Chancellor here have

any need to give his personal security? I will see this goldsmith of Nuremberg; I will get the collar for our Duke; and, Mr. President, it shall all be done for forty per cent, too, if only I may have a sight of that warrant. Aye! this many a day I have waited for this "—he muttered "to see that warrant that may cost him his life! Let me only be able to say to him 'this is the law."

Some hours later President Schmaus was busily engaged with his evening meal, at his Castle of Augerzoll. The venison had just been removed, a flagon of fine Burgundy opened which perfumed the whole room. Old Nicklaus was busy changing plates and filling his master's glass. The eyes of Schmaus shone with a dull flame that showed the fumes had already began to rise to his brain. Just then the door opened and his wife appeared, looking more gaunt and haggard than of old. He half rose, muttering some unintelligible phrase.

"I scarcely thought to find my husband thus occupied still," she said in a contemptuous tone.

"One of the pleasantest occupations a man can have, nevertheless," said Schmaus in a husky voice, "Scarcely excepting that of conversing with a charming wife even After all the cares and worries of the day it is well to be able to shut the door and think over matters calmly—"

He filled a glass, with a tremulous hand, as he spoke, and handed it to her; she waved it away with a gesture of revulsion, "Your reflections do seem to be most profound and edifying," she said, "I am less fortunate than you, I cannot shut out or forget my troubles."

He looked at her with a smile that was malicious even in its imbecility, "and what brings my treasure here at this late hour?" he asked, "Money I presume; it is always money that thou seekest."

"Let me entreat you to give up using that hateful thou. I do not choose to be addressed in that manner. As for money, I only crave enough to enable me to live as befits my birth and position. You forget what is due to me so constantly, that I am forced to remind you of it. I wish to ask you a question—"

"I grow quite curious and impatient!"

"There is, it seems, some plot afloat against the late Chancellor, Dr. Biener. You need not deny it. I have been hearing it discussed at the house of Freiherr von Wolfsthurm. I am no especial friend of Biener's—He is a parvenu, a citizen, but he has done certain favours to our daughter, our poor Loys, and ill would it beseem you to join in any cabal against him."

"But, my treasure, it is too late to talk to me now, I am too deeply implicated to draw back," he said, with a sort of maudlin obstinacy, "my position and income are at stake. But why this sudden accession of interest in Biener?"

"That matters not—and yet I will tell you! I heard it said this evening that certain persons who lie under the heaviest obligations to Biener are those who are the most eager for his fall."

"And am I to listen to what every old woman says?"

"This much I tell you; you are not to join in any such plots. An ancient and noble name, such as mine, must not be exposed to any unsuitable remarks."

When his lady took this highly distasteful tone, Schmaus was wont to put on a semblance of yielding.

"I will think it over, then," he said, "Thou hast little need, though, to thank him for what he has done for Loys. She is miserable with Neuhaus, and there's nobody but Biener accountable for the marriage."

"As she has made her bed, so must she lie. The honour of my ancient family, which was endangered, now remains untarnished."

Old Nicklaus saved his master the trouble of finding another reply. Opening the door just then he said,

"The lady his honour was expecting has come,"

"I will not detain you from the lady," said his wife

haughtily, "but remember! mark my words!"

"No fear but that I will do so, my treasure," said Schmaus, leading her to the door and bowing devotedly over her hand. "This lady is an ancient one, she has come on the very business we were speaking of. If you had stayed a few minutes, you would have discovered how hard I shall find it to comply with your injunctions."

She deigned no further remark, but swept past a woman wrapped in a large cloak and hood, who stood by the door. This was no other than Frau Sepha. With a stealthy tread, she came up to the President apologising for the lateness of the hour—but her business would admit of no delay, she said.

The President motioned her to take a chair, and then desired the wondering Nicklaus to leave the room.

About half an hour later, being summoned by a handbell, the old servant came to show the visitor out. She looked beaming, and was about to pocket a purse which seemed pretty heavy.

"You must keep a silent tongue in your head," were the President's concluding words to her. "Till noon is past to-morrow, no living soul must know of this business."

"What does my gracious lord President mean? I can be silent—silent as the tomb."

"Go home with this lady" said Schmaus to the old man "Give me that bottle first—The clear one."

"Gracious Herr President cannot mean this one?"

said the poor old man, touching a flask of ardent spirits, "Gracious Herr President had far better drink wine. This fiery stuff might harm him."

"All right! Wine is too dull and heavy for me tonight; go thy ways, I know very well, old Nicklaus, what I can stand."

When left alone, the unfortunate wretch began deliberately to intoxicate himself. He went on swallowing the strong spirit till he had entirely drowned sense and recollection, and with them, those voices of his conscience that he well knew must come in the midnight hour and speak to him—dread avengers of his better self—did he not resort to this desperate mode of silencing them.

Next morning, the Privy Council met at the Ottoburg at an unusually early hour. Schmaus and Vollmar were still in the outer chamber, that adorned with the figure of Themis; sitting by a window looking out on the river. Schmaus had just opened the sash to try if the cool air might soothe his aching head and fan his burning face. The strong potations of the night before left him nervous and irritable; a dull fear seemed to oppress him; the last words spoken by his wife rang in his ears, like a knell.

"But that is not according to our compact," he said presently, "you have no right to withdraw your name, and leave all the odium upon my shoulders!"

"But your name is all I require. I, being State Chancellor, am disqualified, as you know, from appearing openly; we cannot have a third party admitted to our counsels. As it now stands, we two can choose any instruments we think fit. I conduct the whole case, you have nothing to do but put your name to it."

"Yes, and to receive all the disgrace and enmity it Vol. 2. M.

will bring on me, while you rub your hands and chuckle to yourself, and get all the benefits, and no one the wiser for it."

"There is no time to choose another-"

"How so? If I was ill, the affair could be shifted to some other man's shoulders—eh?"

The pair might have come to warmer words, but just then Heimbl approached them saying,

"You desire to speak with me, gentlemen?"

Schmaus turned again to the open window, he muttered "Well, I suppose I needs must, but recollect one thing, I'm not going to be put off this time with the empty shell, gilt though it may be, while you munch the good nut."

"Your name is Heimbl, I see," said Vollmar, "A candidate for a revisorship in the Chamber? If you can shew yourself perfectly eligible for it, I think I can promise that you will be appointed—It depends on yourself entirely whether you succeed or not, however."

Heimbl declared himself willing to do his best.

"Some very important papers will be confided to you; you will have to promise blind, implicit, obedience to orders; you may look them over them now, and fill in blanks. When this has been done to our satisfaction, you will receive the appointment you wish for."

He handed him a document, as he spoke, which Heimbl began at once to peruse. Vollmar betook himself once more to the study of the rest of his papers; but the moment the younger man had come to the end of his, he said to him,

"Well, you have gone through it? What do you say? You see with what confidence we are disposed to treat you?"

Heimbl laid the paper down, "Yes, I do see it, and I fear I scarcely deserve this confidence; I will have nothing to do with the business," he said.

"You have the audacity to refuse?—And may I ask why you do so? Are you aware that you may be laying yourself open to grave suspicions by refusing?"

"No, I am not aware that I am doing so. I have always esteemed Chancellor Biener as a good man, and respected his abilities as a Statesman; but I have never had any intimate relations with him, either personally or in business affairs. It is not, however, on grounds personal to him, that I must decline. It smacks too much of detective's or bailiff's work to suit my taste."

"What presumption!—You are one of Biener's creatures!—You need not try to conceal it. This is exactly his tone—a nice specimen, truly, of the school he has taught! Have you counted the cost of this refusal of yours?"

"It means, I presume, that all hope of advancement in this country, is over for me—'Poor Matthew's day is done.' Permit me to retire, gentlemen!"

"You are dismissed!" cried Vollmar. As Heimbl was about to go out by the principal door, he called after him "No! not by that entrance—The door to the left—"

When this was opened, a squad of soldiers was discovered in the corridor outside. "Take this gentleman into custody, keep him fast till you have further orders from me! Be sure of this, Sir, you will have no chance of making affairs of State public which you would never have been acquainted with if I had not been most grossly deceived in you. You can revise the walls of your cell for the present, if you are not likely to become reviser general.

"A fine specimen of your shrewdness in judging of men!" he continued, addressing Schmaus, "To whom, pray, do you mean to turn now, in your astuteness?"

"What a world it is!" said Schmaus spitefully, "You can't be sure of anybody in it. What say you



to keeping it quiet between us two, till we have to get the papers transcribed? We may meet with another rebuff——Stay! I know the very man—Count Spaur!— No fear of his refusing the job!"

Spaur was accordingly summoned. He retired with Schmaus into a deep window recess, while Vollmar followed the other members of the Privy Council now entering into the hall of Session.

Judging by the zeal and interest displayed by Spaur, as he studied the document so contemned by Heimbl, the Count by no means shared the latter's feelings on the subject. It needed but a few minutes for him to come to an understanding with Schmaus. The President's concluding speech proved this fact.

"Hasten then, my dear Count, there is not a moment to lose. Order out the Provost Marshal and his men instantly."

"Eh bien! It is a désagréable business; under some conditions, I might decline it; I might have refusirt, in fact; but as you treat me with such extraordinary préférence, confidence, and as it is such a critical juncture—why, I consent—I comply!"

"His Highness will thoroughly appreciate your zeal, Count; only let me entreat you to use all speed, and whatever you do, do not forget my signal."

A short time afterwards, Schmaus having gone into the Chamber of Session, Koller's shaggy head peered in at the door. Finding the ante-room vacant, he called out to some one following him, "The coast's clear!"

Seiler then slowly appeared, carrying the top and stand of the skittle board that had formerly stood there.

"You hurry a man so, Mr. Justice" panted the Marshal as he set down his load, "Why can't you wait till the Session is over?"

"You know nothing about it, Seiler. I have reasons.

This very hour the table must be in its old corner. So! That's all right!" he added,—surveying the thing when it was set up,—"God be thanked for it! I have found it hard enough to be nothing but titular justice in all these years; but I declare if I was State Chancellor to-day, it would hardly please me better than it does to see that old friend back in its corner again. A good omen it is too; we shall have the good old times back again soon now. Quick, Seiler! I hear footsteps. Set the balls, give me the mace, let's begin and enjoy a game, as we used to do long ago."

He seized the mace, hit hard and called out noisily, "Four, no, five with the first! There—it's your turn now, Seiler."

He had heard Biener's step. The Chancellor came in. He passed the worthy couple without seeming to notice them. In vain did Koller call out the game, in vain he placed himself conspicuously before the Chancellor; nay, he even had the effrontery to stand in his way as he crossed the room. Biener seemed quite unconscious of his presence.

When he had passed on into the inner chamber, Seiler remarked "Now I see why you were in such a hurry, Mr. Justice. But he never so much as glanced at us, you see."

"He saw us sharply enough! He can read the signs of the times too, he knows there is an end of his overbearing ways. He may pretend not to see or to hear; but he knows, at last, that the Tyrolese can be steadfast as their own mountains where their old faith and old rights are concerned!"

As Biener entered the Chamber, his eye noted the various members present, and he was surprised to see the sitting so numerously attended. His hair had turned very grey; but his brow was serene and unclouded. As

he stood there, he had almost the air of a conqueror—"Intolerable insolence!" muttered Vollmar, "but that stiff neck shall be made to bow yet!"

The Chancellor bowed with a gentle courtesy to all present, the fine little smile of former days playing round his mouth, then he said quietly,

"I have come here in obedience to the commands of the Duke, and would desire to know for what matter

my services and advice are needed."

"We are charmed to welcome you back," said Vollmar carelessly, "It is seldom you can be persuaded to leave your Tusculum now, you have become a second Cicero."

"A second Fabius—he also cultivated cabbages,"

added Gröbner.

"Poets naturally prefer solitude," said Pappus. "The Tyrolese Marsial can survey all the land from his watchtower up there, and aim his shafts of epigram at the lower world, as he thinks fit."

Biener's eyes rested on each of the speakers successively. He took no pains to hide the scorn with which he regarded them.

"Your sympathy is excessive," he said quietly, "I only make a virtue of necessity. To translate a line of Horace into the vernacular—'Happy is he who can live remote from strife.' You know how confidently the old Roman thought to find his happiness in 'otiun cum dignitate' that which no man can give or deprive another of—But surely you have not summoned me here to exchange compliments merely?—May I beg to know why I have been sent for?"

"I must crave your patience for a moment, until we receive a certain communication," said Vollmar.

Schmaus looked out of the window anxiously.

A pause of painful expectation ensued. Every one remained silent. Biener alone was perfectly uncon-

cerned. He walked about the Chamber renewing his acquaintance with the paintings and carvings that embellished its walls and ceilings.

At length the moment of suspense seemed over.

The President, first requesting all to attend, began as follows:—

"Our gracious Sovereign, Ferdinand Karl, with a view to promoting the physical and mental welfare of his subjects, and encouraging the fine arts, has just caused to be built in the Rennplatz, a theatre unequalled in the whole of Germany for magnificence. Our public buildings may indeed be almost accused of being too superb for the town and its inhabitants."

A cough was heard, Biener's face began to cloud over, his eyes flashed; the reader went on:—

"His Highness has also received designs for an equestrian statue in bronze of his late lamented father, which he invites you to inspect and criticise." Schmaus here began to unroll some drawings. Biener's eyes sought every face in turn round the long table; each wore an expression of contemptuous irony; turning round upon them, he exclaimed with glowing indignation,

"Is it carnival time with you, gentlemen, that you think it seemly to play off what poor jest you like on me? I know nothing of plays, or playwrights; his Highness would be unlikely to regard my criticisms as of value. If your wish is to humiliate me, let me tell you that the former Chancellor of this realm is no puppet, no machine, to act only as he is instructed to act."

He threw on his hat, and had almost reached the door, as he ended his speech. He flung it open—before him stood a company of soldiers with fixed bayonets.

"What means this?" he thundered, as he turned and looked the assembly in the face.

"Probably the second act of the drama played at the Innsbruck Diet!"—muttered Gröbner.—Biener went on without noticing him, "I am a prisoner then? Had no one manliness enough in him to make a charge against me openly, in the face of day? Was it needful to take me in a trap, privily, like some wild creature? Does this assembly deem this an act worthy of the German Sovereign to execute whose laws they meet here in conclave?"

"I would recommend patience and moderation," said Schmaus, who had gone to a distant window and was watching the further bank of the river, "You are not a prisoner. You are simply compelled to remain in this Chamber until we think fit to let you leave it—We do it only for the benefit of the State."

"It is also for the benefit of the State, doubtless, that you keep guard over my house, up yonder? Speak! Of what am I accused? Ha! there is a cloud of smoke rising from my house--What means it? What does all this signify?"

"It means," said the President with a low bow, "that we will now no longer oppose your wish to depart."

He sounded a bell as he spoke; the folding doors were flung open. The ante-chamber was empty—the soldiers had vanished.

"I go to discover what this insulting farce means.

—Woe to you who have made such an ill use of his Highness's name—who so cruelly mislead him! I shall find a means of reaching his ear yet!"

Almost beside himself with indignation and anxiety he hastened over the bridge and up the hill to the Büchsenhaus. He reached the gates almost running.—His fears were confirmed!—something strange had certainly occurred. The servants were gathered in terrified groups; they went off reluctantly to their various

occupations, as he drew near. He scarcely knew how he managed to reach his library. Here it all burst upon him—the havoc that had been wrought—the violence that had been committed! All his drawers, his secretaries, his private receptacles, had been broken open and pillaged.—Most of their contents lay strewn on the floor.—Elizabeth lay, half fainting, supported by old Schildhofer, in an arm chair.

He stood, for a moment, speechless, motionless, despairing—almost deprived of his senses.

Schildhofer spoke first. "Excellency!" the old man said, "I had but just come up, I wished to say goodbye before I set out for the Passeyerthal—I saw it all!"

"And has it come to this!"—cried Biener at last,—
"Decoyed away on that foolish pretext, that I might
not be here to defend my house, to hinder this destruction!—Have not the very wild beasts of the forest
lairs to which they can flee?—They defend them
to their last drop of blood too!—Am I poorer than
the wild creatures? Less protected? Oh! Ferdinand,
could thy mother see what has been done this day!"

"Do not be angry with me," cried poor Elizabeth, roused from her stupor by the sound of her husband's voice, "I am a poor weak thing—I did try to prevent them,—I was like a wretched little sparrow in the cruel claws of a hawk!"

He took her little trembling hands and kissed them tenderly, "Bless thee, my dear," he said,—"What isthis? blood—Elizabeth! Did they hurt thee?"

"It was all because I fainted," she said, "Why did I not call the men? Of what use was I against them all? But when they broke open the secretary, I did seize a knife. They only mocked me and pushed me away. Husband! Do not blame me, I could not defend thy property against them!"

"Blame thee, my poor little dove? I will bless thee all my life!—I swear that every one of these precious drops of blood shall be avenged!—How? My secret drawer broken open—How could they have discovered that?"

"Oh! they knew everything-Sepha told them."

"What! Betrayed by her? After all my patience with her for years—A fitting accomplice truly!—But they will find themselves in the wrong yet. I am not so friendless and fallen as they suppose! The name of Biener is still known at Vienna—I will seek the Emperor—I will have restitution—They shall be made to suffer for this wanton injury and insult!"

"Oh! My husband, do not talk of restitution—Let us fly, let us only try to escape while we still can do so!"

"Fly? never! Let them weave their nets—I will rend them asunder—I defy them! Fly? Why, that would only be to acknowledge that they had a plea for this violence—It would be to plead guilty."

"But if they should lay violent hands on thee, thyself?" she said anxiously—"They may use brute force against thee!"

"No, that they cannot mean to do, or I should not be standing here this moment."

"I cannot silence the horrible thought—They do mean to kill thee—Listen to me! Listen to the dreadful foreboding that hangs like death over me—Thou art in danger—great danger! Seek safety at Vienna."

Schildhofer came up to him. He had thrown himself wearily into a chair. The tears were in the old man's honest eyes as he spoke to him.

"Listen, Excellency, thou knowest I am not one of the cowardly sort to turn my back on danger. Well! I say to thee, there's safety in flight. 'Out of sight is out of mind' 'discretion's the better part of valour.' 'When the wind's from the South, 'tis good for no man.'"

"But if I forsake my house and home, my country and my friends, I shall be giving ground for suspicion that I confess myself in some way guilty—Well there is an alternative; it may satisfy you all, too! That alternative I could adopt, without dishonour. I will go to the Convent at Wilton. It is a free city of refuge. I shall be in safe sanctuary there, and near at hand, too, if I should be needed—if we are really threatened. Elizabeth art thou easier now?" She threw herself into his arms, shedding tears of joy. Old Schildhofer said,

"Not a bad idea, Excellency; but don't put it off. Take my advice and go this very day to the Wiltner Stift.—Hard as it is, I must bid thee farewell now, Excellency.—The waggon is loaded, the oxen yoked, and I am off for the Passeverthal.—May God keep thee! May all be well with thee yet! And mind this, Excellency, if ever thou need'st a safe corner to take refuge in, come to us. Our's is a sweet valley, and at Meran there's many a comfortable house to be found. Many's the heart that has been lightened by coming there. Mayhap 'twill be so with my poor Afra. She may get her senses again in that quiet place." Here the old man's feelings got the better of him, he took the Chancellor's hand and shook it heartily—"May God preserve thee," he said huskily, "I will say that when I am far away, and many a time too. It has made up to me for some of the heartbreak that I have had here, Excellency, that I have known thee so well. We have been good friends always.—Dost think I shall ever set eves on thee again?"

"To be sure thou wilt, old friend," said Biener cheerily, "Be of good cheer! I'm going to a safe refuge."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CITY OF REFUGE.

THE first grey of dawn had scarcely penetrated the thick foliage of the trees in the Rennplatz, when a troop of soldiers emerged stealthily from the palace and proceeded towards the Cathedral.

From thence they went on to the church of the Holy Trinity, by the Jesuit College. Chancellor Vollmar, so shrouded in a large cloak as to be unrecognisable, accompanied them. He stopped presently, in the shadow of the wall and whispered to one of the men of the Lichtenstein regiment, "Art sure, sirrah, thou wert not mistaken?"

"Certain, Excellency! As soon as it grew dark I climbed up on the wall of the enclosure. I got into the church and hid myself behind a column. Just as ten o'clock had chimed by St. Jacob's bell, the sacristy door opened. Then I saw a light shining from Duchess Claudia's tomb. Try as I would, I could only see the flickering shadow of two men; but not who they were. In another half hour's time, the light went out and I heard the brass gates fall to, heavily."

"Good!" said Vollmar. Turning to another man, he said, "Corporal, have you seen to posting those soldiers where I told you to place them?" "Yes." They then went on to the chancel door and rang a bell that hung outside it. Some time elapsed before any sound was audible within. "I hear nothing, can the holy fathers be all asleep, still?" said Vollmar.

"No fear! They are waiting to reconnoitre us before they venture to open the door."

A heavy step was heard, a little round wicket in the great door opened, and a voice demanded to know who it was who craved admittance so early.

"It is I, State Chancellor Vollmar.—I must speak without more delay with the lord Rector."

"Is your Excellency unattended?"

"I am attended."

The heavy bolts were withdrawn, the great door creaked, a space, just wide enough to admit one man, was visible. Vollmar went in, the porter instantly attempted to shut the door again; but before this could be effected the bayonets of the soldiers had been thrust into the space, the bolts could not be shot.

"What means this?" cried the porter, "Would you break into the house of the Lord by force? It is sacrilege! Begone, ye violaters of the temple! Begone before fire from heaven descends to destroy you!"

The soldiers only laughed. The poor old brother was quite powerless to resist them. By this time, the Rector could be seen hurrying towards them. As he crossed the transept he called out to Vollmar,

"What audacity is this, Excellency? The College is holy ground; you commit sacrilege if you intrude thus by force!"

"I am here by the express and urgent commands of my sovereign, the ruler of this land. He alone is answerable for my action."

"And what may be his Highness's commands then? Yet it were more seemly to declare them in the sacristy than here in the public street, as it were, quasi in patibulo."

"So be it," said Vollmar. The soldiers had meantime passed in. Twelve he commanded to keep guard at the door, six to follow him into the church, two to accompany them into the sacristy, two others to wait outside.

"You are remarkably careful, Chancellor!" said the Rector with a contemptuous smile.

"I know with whom I have to deal," Turning to the men he added, "Two of you also keep guard by the royal vault."

"Are the dead so very dangerous, then?"

"The habitations of the dead may shelter those who have evil designs. Advance!" He cried to his men. "The block of stone closing the tomb of Duchess Claudia is neither light nor easily moved—There can scarcely be a second entrance?"

The torches carried by the men cast a weird and ghastly glare on the walls, and on the vaulted roofs; the vast windows began to glimmer with a faint, cold light; the whole scene was gloomy and spectral.

"Your reverence knows what is the object of this visit," said Vollmar presently. "From his sacred office of Confessor to his Highness Duke Ferdinand, Father Gravenegger had many important papers in his keeping. At the very hour of his sudden demise the brother, in charge of these papers, had them conveyed to the College. They are the property of his Highness; he demands their restitution; I have come to resume our possession of that property which you so iniquitously retain."

"You have already received the reply of the College to this demand. The Society of Jesus always falls heir to the possessions of its members at their demise. We only took what was our own, when we resumed our charge of Father Gravenegger's effects. Should any papers be found amongst these belonging either to his Highness or any private person we are quite ready to restore them; but, should our rights be disputed or interfered with, the disputant shall be denounced as a sinful and sacrilegeous person."

"I would counsel you to think well of what you are doing, most reverent Father. His Highness brooks no attempt to defy his supremacy in this kingdom. He suffers no society to exist here independently of his rule. If you still decline to deliver up those papers, he is prepared to proceed to extremities."

"And what may that involve? What extremities do you threaten if I persist in my refusal?"

"I have his Highness's warrant for the razing to the ground of this College and all its tenements; the confiscation of all its goods; I have a signed order that the Rector and all the Fathers should seek some other kingdom within the space of twenty-four hours."

The Rector grew perceptibly paler. "Do you actually hold this warrant in your hands?" he asked.—Vollmar shewed him the Duke's sign manual—"And you really mean that you will carry out this warrant, Chancellor?" he said quietly and gravely.

"If you persist in your refusal, it will be done within the next hour."

"Truly you are very ready to use your new power, Mr. Chancellor. I would add, to use it against the very Society which helped you to gain your present position. You seem to forget that we never anticipated such an !unscrupulous use of it as this. There are conditions—"

Vollmar looked at him in some astonishment.

"We have means of informing ourselves of everything," proceeded the Rector, "Our Society encircles the whole of the globe. Time—space—are as nothing to us. Self-interest, individual interests, are unknown. We are

all as limbs of one body; what one of us leaves unfinished, another takes up where he left it. By the death of Father Gravenegger we have been deprived of a most valuable co-adjutor; but the work confided to him has not ceased with his life. It was not to a single individual you pledged yourself when you promised your allegiance to him, it was to our Society. Is this how you fulfil that pledge?"

Vollmar bit his lips nervously, and looked down; for a moment he was non-plussed. After a considerable

pause, he said,

"Well—make it possible for me to do so! His Highness's warrant, in that case, may be evaded. I am not ungrateful; but you will find it for your interest to oblige me."

The Rector's keen glance was upon him; but Vollmar did not flinch. "Try to understand me."

"Good! You may inform his Highness that he shall have all Father Gravenegger's papers sent to him; all of them, without exception."

" Well?"

"You can tell him that they have been thoroughly examined, there is nothing in them that concerns the State or could interest him; they refer solely to spiritual matters."

"Then why do you propose to send them to him?"
The Rector's eye flashed, but there was a certain solicitude mingled with his anger. He said after a time,

"What you seek, what you have got the Duke to join you in demanding, you will find in the vaults below. You can go down into them. When you come to the farthest chamber you will find it blocked by a large stone with a cross cut on it; when that stone is removed you will see what you want.—Now, hand me that decree for the secularisation of this building."

"Agreed—Provided, that is to say, that I do find the thing I seek in these vaults."

"You can go and look; I will await you here."

The men held up their torches; Vollmar descended the narrow, winding stairs leading to the vaults.

A passage became dimly visible along which they proceeded, noting the entrance to the different tombs, until the red glare fell on a great block of stone with a cross carved upon it. Vollmar desired the men to remove it; this they managed to do with some difficulty. A chamber, containing several recesses in the wall was then discovered. In these niches were placed a number of wooden chests—the names of the owners written on each.

"You can go up the steps and wait until I call you," said Vollmar to the two soldiers, "but leave your torches in those iron rings in the wall."

When the men were gone he dragged out Grave-negger's chest.—It was really there—He opened it; with eager quivering haste he searched it through.

"Marvellous!" he muttered to himself, "What a head he had—What is this? 'Notes as to Court officials' remarks as to his Highness's disposition' Pshaw! 'list of Cures and their incumbents' 'Population of the various Parishes' 'Distribution of Church lands'—Hold!" he cried suddenly, "This is it!"

It was indeed Biener's packet—just as he had described it—sealed by himself and Malaspina superscribed so many years ago!

With trembling hands, almost frenzied with joy and excitement, he tore open the enveloping paper and tremblingly drew out its contents.

"And this is the thing that has haunted me for so long!" he murmured, "A warning, indeed, never to commit oneself on paper! My scheme for the surrender

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of the Breisgau—the one meant for Bernhard of Weimar—Inconceivable how it could ever have got into Biener's clutches! But still more astounding, why should he never have used it to my disadvantage. Those were visionary ideas, truly—What a bloody awaking I might have come by, if only they had fallen into other hands! Away with thee, mad proof of my rashness and carelessness!—But the seals seem still unbroken—How is this? does no one else then guess at their contents? There is but one living man who knows them—Go! thou terrible witness—In this chamber of death, turn thou to dust!"

He held the packet to the flame of a torch till it became red tinder. This slowly, surely, fell on the damp floor, it crumbled into white dust—He trod upon it, till every trace had disappeared.

Soon after the party quitted the Church.

President Schmaus was deep in a very interesting study. The whole contents of Biener's private secretary and writing table had been delivered to him and were piled on his table. He was going through them eagerly, reading some carefully, only glancing at others; so far, little of an important or compromising nature was forthcoming. Every paper they could lay hands on had been carried off from the Büchsenhaus. Certificates of Biener's boyish proficiency; degrees taken in later life; family papers; letters from his friends and family; extracts made from Tacitus, Erasmus, Macchiavelli; drafts of bills for ameliorating the condition of the people; translations from Horace, Martial, and others; outlines of poems to be written some day.

Schmaus read on in amazement. Despite his own poverty of imagination, he began dimly to feel that this was a noble nature he was unveiling to himself. It

dawned upon him that this man was such as few he had known. Manly, righteous, large minded, of a most pure and exalted character. He could see how ideal was his standard of excellence, how bravely he strove after its attainment, how earnestly he sought for spiritual truth and tried to live up to it. Involuntarily, Schmaus contrasted the image of this man with his own—Nay, for a few minutes his better self was so much in the ascendant that he became sorrowful, remorseful—Claudia's sealed letter addressed to her son, then fell into his hands, her acknowledgment of having burnt the treaties—this in her own handwriting—Last of all he took up a little clasped note book. In this was jotted down the satirised version of the couplet beneath Claudia's portrait.

Here then was the object of Vollmar's search. Thus did he mean to rob his foe of his weapon of desence, to destroy him bodily.

Schmaus felt that this was indeed the crisis of Biener's fate. It lay with him to decide it—If he destroyed these lines—returned him his receipt for the treaties—Biener was, saved. If he gave them up to Vollmar, the Chancellor was a ruined man.

His brain reeled; he hesitated; he seized the bottle of Burgundy, without which by his elbow he never worked, he hoped to find support, decision, there.

Just then, another little clasped volume met his eye. He opened it and began to read its contents. A smile of amusement widened his big lips. It grew to a laugh; the pungency of a wit that scourged others tickled him vastly. Often did he pause to laugh aloud; he even repeated lines to himself, commenting on them meanwhile. "Ah!" he said, "what's this? Vollmar's antecedents. Interesting particulars about his connections! That, I shall take leave to preserve for my own private edification. A rough sketch, but most graphic and

complete—How I do hate Vollmar's selfish greed—Keeping me out of my rightful office, throwing me a bone now and then, just as if I was a cur! Then he makes me neither more nor less than a puppet in his hands!"

Presently, his face grew purple, he half rose, his eyes were fixed on a new revelation he had just made. He seemed as if about to choke with rage. Then he read as follows,

The Modern Midas.

"Although no crown may adorn his brow, A Midas is in our midst, I trow: This Schmaus if you meet, you will see and hear The babbling tongue and the ass's ear."

"Schmaus," which means banquet, was written in capital letters and marked under to denote its double significance—Yes! he was this modern Midas!

The fat President leaned back in his chair breathing hard. His little dull eyes almost glared with rage, and his features swelled with a passion of revenge such as rarely possesses so phlegmatic a nature. He paced up and down heavily for a time. Then he seized Duchess Claudia's receipt for the treaties, tore it into atoms and flung them into the fire. "There!" he cried, "That's the answer the modern Midas gives to your fine epigram!" Then he sat down and wrote a hasty note to Vollmar.

"The hawk has flown right into the net. What are we to do with him?" were its concluding words. He summoned old Nicklaus, sealed the note, and gave it to him to take to the State Chancellor.

"There are two gentlemen here, waiting to see you, gracious Herr President," said the old man, "His Highness's chamberlain, and the Fiscal Hippoliti."

"Shew in the Duke's chamberlain by himself," said Schmaus.

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When Marello appeared, he hurried to meet him, exclaiming with overstrained civility,

"What a pleasure to see you at this early hour!"

"Thanks," said Marello, "Altesza sets forth betimes this morning. He escorts the bride and bridegroom, il Duca di Mantua e Montferrat, and our adorable Princess Clara Isabel, one stage on their journey south. We halt at Lienz; capital hunting quarters, so we may probably be absent for some weeks. I only looked in to beg you to keep me in remembrance, nella sua memoria, meantime."

"There's little need to ask me to do that," said Schmaus smiling blandly. The fellow went on carelessly.

"Have you no news—nothing that I can tell his Highness?" Sapeti, as Cameriere, certain little items often come in usefully—"

"Well, I can oblige you—You may inform his Highness that no receipt for the missing treaties with the Grisons exists among Biener's papers—You understand what I mean?"

"Bravo! Bravissimo?" cried Marello.

"Also—I have found this sealed letter amongst Biener's documents addressed to his Highness. The writing and seal prove it is from Duchess Claudia. It has been purposely detained by Biener. Perhaps you will have the goodness to deliver it?"

"Certainly! Certainly! This is excellent, Mr. President, most important—I will duly report what you say. *Addio—Carrissimo!* Be sure to let me know if at any time I can in any way oblige you."

Schmaus accompanied him to the door and he departed smiling and triumphant. The Fiscal then came in. "Good morning, my dear Hippeliti," said the President, "I invited you to breakfast this morning, that the very isagreeable business we shall have to go into afterwards, may be in some degree qualified by a little social

enjoyment."

"At your service, Mr. President. I only trust the business may turn out to be what I anticipate," said Hippoliti.

"And what may that be, my good sir?"

"It is rumoured that his Highness is about to institute criminal proceedings against the late State Chancellor Biener. I, being a young man, am naturally eager for an opportunity of distinguishing myself such as this would be sure to prove."

"Your wish is about to be gratified, that is the very

business we must discuss this morning."

The wily Italian assumed an air of surprise.

"And do you really mean to entrust the conduct of a case of this magnitude to me? How am I ever to evince my gratitude to you?"

"By exerting your best abilities for us. It is a case which turns on no ordinary issues. We deal with no specified crime that can be named and dealt with, like arson or murder. You will find a hundred little circumstances all tending towards the one end. You have, in fact, a case before you that might perplex the most astute and learned lawyer; but, as you well know, the art of our profession is to frame a case out of nothing!"

The Fiscal's eyes gleamed with malignant joy.

"You may rely upon me in every way," he said.

"Very good, then. I will give you all the needful documents. Here are the depositions and evidence adduced at the former trial, as well as more recent accusations. You had better set to work *instanter*."

"Who gives me my brief, may I ask?"

"Of that, more anon. Now, let us to breakfast and try to forget business for a time, at least. But are those not carriage wheels? My other guest, doubtless. A

friend whom you must have often seen when you were at Trient; the Bishop Suffragan, Joshua Perkhofer."

The doors were flung wide open and this dignified personage appeared, wrapped in a red cloak, his jewelled cross flashing on his breast.

In the doorway he stopped and raised his right arm in benediction, while a pleasant smile lighted up his hard, shrewd, countenance.

"I greet you in the name of the Lord!" he said, "Your invitation was all the more welcome, Mr. President, that I am almost worn out with hard work. Bishop Anton grows so infirm that everything has to devolve on me. I enjoy a sociable meeting like this."

"Let me beg of you to be seated, then, without delay, and try whether my Burgundy may help to drown your worries for a time. You know your compatriot, Mr. Fiscal Hippoliti?"

"Your Lordship refers to the extra work consequent on your newly acquired suzerainty over all the convents and nunneries in the Tyrol, I presume? Do you find many abuses existing?"

"A superabundance of them you may be sure!" said Perkhofer, leaning back in his chair and sipping the wine with half closed eyes and all the air of a connoisseur, "It is a constant struggle to maintain my authority over the different establishments. Every Prior, Abbot, Abbess, in the land—black, white, blue or red,—would set up a separate claim and defy my sacerdotal supremacy. The spirit of insubordination abroad is incredible. It needs all the weight of my arm to guide things. What are we to come to, if each small brotherhood is to have power to govern itself?"

Schmaus filled the Bishop's glass again, and it was a large one. He acknowledged the attention, then went on,

"Why, only this morning, on my way hither, I was openly defied by the Premonstative Monks at Wilton. Bishop Andrew, good man as he may be, remonstrated so loudly against my visitation, that I had to give in to him and abandon it."

"And yet, I dare wager, there's many a fragrant blossom to be culled in the course of your pasteral duties, such as we poor seculars dare not even so much as dream of!"

"Apage! Wicked worldling, that you are!" said the Bishop, playfully threatening Schmaus with his finger, "We would not think of anything uncanonical, much less speak of it in that light manner! Fie upon you! What do you say, Mr. Fiscal? Doesn't our worthy host deserve a penance inflicted on him for his naughty hints? I will fill his glass, and, if he does not empty it at a draught, why, he will have as his extra penance to drink another!"

Schmaus, nothing loath, tossed off a bumper and turned down his glass to prove that not a drop was left. Perkhofer, who was slightly elevated by the wine already, insisted, amid much laughter, on his emptying a second.

At the height of their revels, a loud knocking at the door startled them. Schmaus reluctantly called out "Come in," and a haggard looking man rushed up to where they were sitting. In considerable agitation and haste, he panted,

"Pardon my intrusion; but my luckless news will not admit of any delay—"

Schmaus had risen to receive the new comer.

"Speak! For God's sake, say what it is! I know it must be about Biener. Speak!" he cried.

"I should say it was!" said the man rudely, "Count von Möhr and I went up just now to the Büchsenhaus as arranged, empowered to arrest him. The house had

been carefully guarded and watched all the night through; he could not possibly have quitted it—"

"Well? He is where he ought to be at this moment?"

"No—alas! Unaccountable as it seems, he was nowhere to be found. We searched every nook and cranny, not a trace of him could we find, Excellency!"

This news served effectually to sober the trio. Schmaus saw instantly the peril they were in. If Biener actually had succeeded in getting clear away from Innsbruck—if he should manage to reach Vienna—if the Emperor got information of the matter—then, indeed, all was lost. For the moment, all seemed to hang on the cast of a die. In any case, it would now be war to the knife between them. He managed to say—

"He has fled? You know no more about him than that?"

"He has as good as escaped us. He has taken sanctuary at the convent of Wilton—a Free City you know—"

"A cursed clever idea, that," muttered Hippoliti. Schmaus ambled up and down the room excitedly,

"What a man it is! What a man!" he groaned, "But I knew it! I knew he would prove too crafty for us! Just as all was arranged so well, to be baffled in this way!"

"We have surrounded the convent with guards; every door and window is watched; if he sets as much as one foot across the threshold, he becomes our prisoner."

"He is not such a fool as to do that. No! From that secure retreat, he'll appeal to the Emperor, spend a couple of weeks, perhaps, pleasantly with the fathers, and then get leave from Vienna to come out."

"Could he not be drawn by some artifice?" asked.

Hippoliti, "If we got intelligence—for instance—of his wife's alarming illness conveyed to him?—Eh?"

"As if that would matter to him!" said Schmaus derisively.

"We might try at any rate. No one knows better than I, how devoted he is to her. Old as he is, he is as madly in love with her as any boy. Now is there any reliable person, I wonder, whom we could trust to manage this?"

During the foregoing colloquy, the Bishop, apparently quite unconcerned by it, was walking up and down before the book-shelves, calmly reading the titles of the President's books. Presently he took down a volume and began to turn over its leaves.

"My lord! Can you give us no advice at all?" cried Schmaus, going up to him, "How can you see us in such a fix, and make no sort of attempt to help us out of it?"

"You have a very fine collection of books here, President" replied Perkhofer quietly, "Your theological library is really excellent. Why, you have even got Diane."

Schmaus cried indignantly "You are only laughing at me—What has the goddess of the bow and spear to do with Biener?"

The Bishop laughed till he nearly cried.

"Oh I don't mean the heathen goddess Diana," he said, as soon as he could speak, "but Diane, the great writer on ecclesiastical matters. Don't you know that you are the happy owner of one of his works? An opusculum, on Pope Gregory's Bull the fourteenth, diimmunitate ecclesiastica."

Schmaus gazed at him, suddenly enlightened.

"Bishop! Friend! Angel of deliverance!" he cried.

"Yes—I find it here written that, under sundry exceptional circumstances, a Bishop has plenary powers

granted him to deprive all convents of their right of sanctuary."

"Oh, exercise it now!" cried Schmaus in an ecstasy, "In the whole of Christendom, so exceptional a case as this could scarcely be found. I implore, I beseech you, Bishop, to deprive this convent of it!"

"I would not have you suppose me actuated by any feelings towards Chancellor Biener that are not personally friendly," said Perkhofer, "It is true that we of Brixen, might fairly be supposed to have had cause for complaint in former days; but we can forget and forgive. I should be, therefore, simply fulfilling a duty by asserting, in a becoming manner, the authority of their superior over arrogant and disobedient vassals."

"What do I care about your motives?—Let the man only be driven from his damned asylum!" cried Schmaus, "You will deprive him of it?"

"Well—I will! In an hour's time, you shall have my written sanction for doing as you think best. In return, you may very probably be able to oblige me at some future time. Let us finish our breakfast now. Let us drown our troubles in the wine-cup," he added, as they seated themselves, with the addition of the secretary, once more round the table. "So many lawyers present; yet let us drink a bumper to the Code of the Church!" He held up his glass, all touched it, "Long life to the church and her discipline. All honour to the man who has amended her statutes, too!"

The feast went on with increasing mirth. Costly fruits brought across the Brenner from Italy, delicate meats, game, and fish, were washed down by strong wines. When, at length the ecclesiastic rose to his feet, and so gave the signal for breaking up, the party were all more or less unsteady in their gait.

Old Nicklaus brought in Vollmar's reply to the note

sent by Schmaus, just as they were separating. The President laughed as he read it, handing it to Hippoliti he shouted out to him,

"Here, Mr. Fiscal! You wanted to know by whose authority you were to take proceedings against Biener.

Read that!"

"It is one line only, 'Dead dogs cannot bite,'" said Hippoliti, rather bewildered. They exchanged a meaning look, "Ah! that is decided then?" said the fellow, and he hastened away.

A dense, wet, mist had crept down from the hills, and the night was dark as pitch. The picturesque outline of the Wilton Stift was invisible, but from one of its lower windows a bright ray of light streamed out into the midnight gloom. This window was in the portion of the building which had the right of Sanctuary attached to it, and here Chancellor Biener had sought refuge from the malice of his foes.

He was sitting by a table supplied with writing materials, and in earnest discourse with his son Rudolph who had just joined him. The young man was disguised as a peasant. He had grown tall and strong, his countenance beamed with intelligence, his dark eyes were full of ardour and spirit; courage and quick determination spoke in every line of his face, every gesture of his well knit frame.

At the first rumour of his father's misfortunes he had left his College at Salzburg and hastened to him. Biener's eyes were dwelling on his son with pride and affection. Laying his hand on a document, which he seemed to have been completing, he said,

"Thou hast come, my boy, most opportunely. This memorial, addressed to the Emperor is ready to send; I had been in the greatest perplexity to know how I might

get it conveyed to Vienna. Here thou art come to me, and all the difficulty is solved! To-morrow I will write to a few of my old friends in Austria—to Count Trantmansdorf, more especially—as soon as all shall be ready thou wilt take charge of them and start for Vienna."

"Father, I will neither stop nor stay till I get therehow I thank thee for trusting me thus!"

"Hark—what is that sound? dost thou not hear the clanking of steel? the tramp of soldiers?"

"I can hear nothing, father, but the sighing of the wind in the branches of the trees."

"No? Well then, let us try to get a little rest, my son, thou wilt have need of all thy best strength for to-morrow's journey. We may lay ourselves down and sleep in peace, in this blessed retreat."

They retired into a small sleeping room that opened off the chamber where they had been sitting, their light was soon extinguished, and father and son slept, locked in each other's arms.

And yet Biener's keen senses had not deceived him. Armed men were rapidly surrounding the convent, and at that very moment his foes were lying in wait to seize him. Every wicket was soon guarded, outposts placed at all corners of the building.

Suddenly a gun was fired. Loud voices, the clashing of steel, broke horribly in on the stillness of the night. Then the deep bell of the convent sounded, its echoes pealing along the empty corridors and vaulted roofs.

The old porter, startled from his sleep, hurried to the great gates; his palsied head shaking, murmuring a terrified prayer as he went. The Abbot, who had been alarmed by the first distant sounds, came forth from his apartments. He crossed the stone vestibule, descended the steps, and called courteously to those without to

know what so strange a disturbance in the dead of the night mean.

Seiler, who led the soldiers, replied insolently, "You are harbouring the person of a felon here in your convent. I have come to take Ex-Chancellor Biener into custody and march him off to prison. Here is my warrant, if you wish to see it."

"You are powerless to touch any one who has claimed the right of sanctuary here! This is one of the Cities of Refuge of our realm, all who seek shelter within these sacred walls are in safety!"

"You may assert whatever you choose, such are my orders," said the fellow, "You may change your tune perhaps when you read this," he added, and he held up a paper which it was impossible for the Abbot to decipher by the flickering glare of the torchlight, "Your fine sanctuary exists no longer; it is abolished! Come, there's no help for you, so you had best yield up the prisoner with as little delay as possible."

"I appeal to the laws of our land—I protest against so gross an outrage!"

"You may appeal to Rome, if you choose," growled Seiler roughly, "One thing I'm sure of, I am not to return without my prisoner."

"I must know what the brethren say to so outrageous an act of tyranny, an injustice, I will hold a Chapter—"

"Do what you please, but my orders must be obeyed. See, look at this. Here is the document by which your Convent is deprived of its right of sanctuary. This legalises everything that we may be forced to do. Advance, my men! Yonder door to the left will be the one. If it doesn't yield to us peaceably you must splinter it, that's all!"

"But this is brute force, sacrilege, a breach of God's

holy laws! I protest against it—I will make you and your fellows answerable for all consequences—"

His voice was drowned amidst the tumult that now burst forth. Blows thundered on the sanctuary door, men shouted, swords clashed. At first the stout oaken planks, the strong bars and hinges, resisted bravely; but Seiler, driven wild by the delay, seized a crowbar and struck so desperately that the wood splintered at last, the hinges gave way, and the fragments fell inwards with a crash.

"Tell me, for God's sake, what means this?" said a voice from within.

"Chancellor Biener, you are my prisoner. I arrest you on the Duke's warrant!" shouted Seiler.

"Father! don't yield thyself up to them!" whispered Rudolph, clinging desperately to him, "Let us have a struggle for it—we will grapple with them one by one as they come on!"

"It is hopeless," said his father calmly, "It is quite useless to even attempt to resist such a body of men as this. But do thou fly, my son. Fly, before thou art seen. This window may still be unguarded. Fly to Vienna, it is our one desperate hope. There only can I expect to find help."

The young man flung his arms about his father. He kissed him on the cheek. Then, opening the lattice, he swung himself on the window-sill and sprang lightly down into the garden, just as the soldiers burst violently into the little room.

Seiler rushed up to the Chancellor, he grasped his arm roughly and declared him his prisoner.

"Stay!" cried a soldier, "Somebody has just escaped out of this window—There he goes! he's climbing the garden window at this moment! Fire—fire on him, in the devil's name!"

A loud report was heard. The room was filled with smoke, for a time there was silence. Biener looked white as death, he bowed his head, he waited in an agonised suspense. What might not that shot have done?—Then a clear ringing shout burst on his ear, and he breathed again.

"Thank God for His great mercy!" he said fervently. "Now, Marshal, I am ready to follow you—Permit me

only to put on some of my clothes."

"My orders don't admit of delays for anything. You'll have plenty of time for dressing, once you're safe in jail, I warrant," said the hardened wretch.

Without uttering another word, the Chancellor threw his sur-lined cloak round him and followed the men.

As he quitted the Convent he stretched out his hand to the Abbot in token of his friendship and confidence.

The poor old man seemed bowed down by the weight of the insult and wrong that had been put upon him. His sacred rights annulled—his sanctuary violated—his friend betrayed!

A closed carriage was waiting on the road. Biener was rudely hustled into it, and in the course of an hour the town was reached, and he had been conducted to a cell below the House of Session at the Ottoburg.

The man who but a few short months ago had wielded the destinies of this realm, was cast into a dark dungeon, one of those usually occupied by criminals during the days between their conviction and execution. Even this wretched spot had been stripped of its usual furniture. An empty space was dimly visible by the light of a small iron lamp fastened against the green and mouldy wall, down which trickled streams of damp, making the floor noisome and horrible. There was not even a bench, on which to rest his limbs. Yet Biener heeded this not. He was moved to the very depths of his nature by the

insult, the outrage offered to him. Pacing these narrow bounds he wrapped his cloak round him, then threw it open, as he was by turns chilled or fevered by the intensity of his emotion.

The night was already far advanced. Not a sound, save the measured tread of the sentinel, was audible in this dark vault, more like a dwelling for the dead than for the living. At first, thoughts of vengeance filled his mind—rage had complete possession of him—rage against the contrivers of so foul a deed; but, soon, bodily fatigue and mental pain began to tell on his vigorous frame. Almost with a sense of despair, he thought of the future—of the past—of his life spent in efforts to improve the condition of his fellow beings-of all his bright, early visions, -of his schemes for the advancement of the people all now shattered,—lying in the dust. His heart contracted with a spasm of positive bodily pain. Was might to crush down right, in all the ages? Was this the appointed end of an honourable career? Was this dungeon to be his last resting-place? He cast his arms round one of the damp, cold, pillars that supported the low roof; he leaned his forehead against the rough stone: he wurmured, half aloud.

"Oh thou, who wert to be my guardian angel, now,—now,—is the fitting time for thee to show thyself! My need is sore! My ange!—wilt thou not now come to my aid?"

He heard a sound—he raised his head. Rough voices and the clash of weapons were audible, apparently the soldiers were barring the entrance to some one. A voice penetrated through the gloom; it stirred his heart; it filled him with ecstasy. "Yes—my angel indeed!" he cried aloud, "Elizabeth! Come to me my wife!—Do not let them keep thee from me!"

The men fell back, impressed by his commanding tone, they allowed her to pass into the cell.

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She looked wild and terrified, her delicate limbs were only protected from the chill night air by a long white wrapper, her hair streamed over her shoulders. She fell trembling into his outstretched arms—Long she lay there, speechless—motionless. Her eyes, so fixed and stony, at first could only see his face; but gradually she began to realise where it was that they met. She was unable to comprehend how it could be that he was in such a place. Her poor old faithful dog had followed her. He began to fawn upon his master and lick his hands in wild delight.

"Elizabeth!" cried Biener again, and he drew her closer to him, and stroked fondly the neglected curls that fell in such rich clusters over her face. "Elizabeth! I thought for a moment, dear, thou wert not real. Can it be thee indeed? I had called on my guardian angel—I doubted—I despaired. Thou hast come to banish my dark unbelief! If thou art only near me, I know I shall prevail against all my foes. But how has it been possible for thee to get here? How did'st thou know where I was?"

She was too much agitated and confused to answer him at first; then she said in a trembling voice,

"Rudolph—He ran all the way behind thy carriage. He saw where they left thee—He knew the bridge was guarded, he swam across the river, he told me."

"My own brave boy—May God preserve him! He has many, many, dangers to run! But thou, my love, how hast thou faced the darkness with no protector,—no mantle—no warm covering?"

"Could I wait for anything?—No! better that the night should hide my despair—Great God! how can such things be allowed? Thou—thou who only yesterday wert so feared, so loved, the first man in all the land—thou in such a den as this! Husband, wake ine—I am

surely sleeping—this must be some terrible dream—I am not here standing by thee in a prison? It is false!"

She gazed at him so beseechingly, so pitifully, with the big tears welling up in her eyes, that his fortitude at last gave way.

"It is no dream-Feel this stone, it is real" he said.

"Oh! how frightful it is when men are strong as well as wicked;" she cried wildly—then she grasped him by the shoulders convulsively, "If they should dare——! Oh! my blood curdles when I think what they may dare to do—I cannot speak the words, they are sacrilege to thee, my lord, my king—But that awful voice keeps saying always on and on—'Since they have done this—will they stop till they make themselves safe?'—Safe? and how are they to be safe, after such a deed as this, how until——Husband! Biener! In all thy long, good, life hast thou ever done a deed that might now be brought in judgment against thee? It kills me to think what they may not lay to thy charge."

"But my dear one,"—he said soothingly—She broke out again excitedly—"Thou, who art all the world to me, my life—my God—Yes! I know it is sinful to say it, but it is, it is so! On my knees I confess it—my all in all—my great, good, husband—Biener! If it were possible that thou might'st be in any way guilty—all my faith—my belief in everything would die!"

"My dearest—My wise—be calm, be comforted—Indeed, indeed I am quite guiltless. This I can swear to thee, before my God and thine. Can'st thou doubt me? My enemies have crept in between the Duke and me. He is weak, careless, indolent—he has listened to them; yet, hopeless and black as all now seems, if there be a just God in Heaven He will not let them harm one hair of my head!"

She looked long, silently into his eyes—then she

sighed. "I am content," she said, "for I do know that all things here below are guided by a just Creator who will not let His children perish."

"Time's up-You must budge!" cried the sentry,

jingling his keys.

She clung for a moment to him despairingly; but he whispered, "Show that thou can'st be brave, remember thou art my wife! Don't give them the satisfaction of beholding our anguish, my child."

She drew herself gently from his arms, shook back the tangled curls that hung over her face, and gazed long at him, as if to stamp his image for ever on her heart; then she took both his hands in hers, and kissed him reverently on the lips. She covered her face with a fold of her garment, she turned resolutely away, when his voice made her look round once again.

The faithful old dog, which had never left her for so many years, made no sign of following her now. It lay at Biener's feet, its wise eyes turned upon him "See! Fidel would stay with me," he said, "Shall it be so? Can'st thou spare him?"

She burst once more into heart-rending sobs, once more she flung herself into his arms.

"Oh yes—yes, I leave my heart, my very life, with thee, should I not leave thee poor Fidel then? I will be strong—I will weep no more. Thou art innocent, and a just God governs the world."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CASTLE.

AY had not yet dawned; but a female wrapped in a thick mantle, was already crouching beneath the archway of the gates which shut in the dark and gloomy Jews' quarter from the rest of Innsbruck.

The air was shrewd and nipping, for it was far on in September and a hoar frost had powdered the tall steep roofs and gables all around with white.

The woman shivered and drew her warm mantle more closely round a sleeping child, which she held tenderly pressed to her breast.

As the first grey glimmer of light penetrated between the houses of the narrow street, the gatekeeper's wife appeared, yawning and rubbing her eyes, and drew back the heavy iron bars of the gates. They fell open, and some meanly dressed Hebrews came trooping out, talking eagerly as they plodded along, bending under heavy packs and bundles. They were eager to get to work betimes, so as to earn every penny they could, for, as a rule, their pay was very small, and so they passed on their way without observing Sarah and her infant. This closely veiled woman was old Abraham May's daughter.

As soon as the narrow!street looked empty again, she rose and fled down it towards her father's house. She listened; but there was no sound audible, no one was stirring as yet; then she pulled the well remembered latch. It yielded, the door opened; she crept in, and

slowly, cautiously, went up the wooden stairs. When she found herself on the upper storey, her head reeled, she turned faint and had to lean against the handrail for support. All the joys of her childhood, all the struggles of later years, rushed to her memory. At last, overcoming her weakness, she stole softly to a closed door and bent her head to listen. Fancying that she heard a footstep approaching, she sank trembling on her knees. Her heart was beating almost to suffocation, it was all she could do to keep herself from crying out aloud, for through a small aperture she could see her father—and she saw him for the first time since she had fled from his house so many years ago! He had just ended his morning's devotions; the long leathern prayer thongs were still in his hands; his silvery head was bowed. She dared not speak until he should have risen again from his knees. Still kneeling, she tried gently if she could not open the door. It resisted her efforts-She cried "Father - father! Open thy door to thy Sarah! Open thy heart to her again! thy Sarah is here, she is waiting for thee to let her in—" sobs choked her utterance, she leaned up against the door, faint with grief and terror-"Father! I am come to take my leave of thee. Goodbye!" The silence of death followed. "Father! I have to leave my country, my home—thy Sarah will come back to thee no more-let me hear one little word from thy dear lips-bid me, 'God speed' Thy Sarah waits here, father!"

Silence, utter silence only. She said again, after a while, "Father—I know how great must be thy wrath—Let me hear thy dear voice but once more even though it should be in anger! Father—I must hear thee speak, I must, I must,—thy dear head will be sacred to me all my life long,—Father! I am not alone—" she cried once more, "Thy grandchild is here with me——"

Not a sound came in response, but some one seemed to be stirring in the upper part of the house where Aaron slept. If she would escape seeing her odious cousin she must fly.—Then, once again, did she cry, and it seemed as if her very heart was in that cry,

"Father! I dare not stay longer. Must I go out into the wide world and not once hear the sound of thy dear voice?—Then farewell! I will be grateful to thee for evermore, I will teach my baby to bless thy name—"

Behind that door, so inexorably closed against her, old Abraham stood, his arms stretched out towards her, words of passionate love and benediction ready to burst from his lips. There was no bitterness remaining for his child in his heart; yet anger against the man who had robbed him of her, consumed him but the more remorselessly; was he never, never to be avenged?

The sun had risen, and his beams glanced joyously on field and hedge, as they shone from behind the shoulder of the mountain, melting the early frost, and sparkling on the dewdrops that now glittered on every autumn leaf and blade of grass by the wayside. The gossamer stretching from branch to branch of the great fir-trees made a festoon of diamonds across the road. A light carriage bowled along merrily by the banks of the Inn. Heimbl was driving it and whistling cheerily to the horse; beside him sat Sarah and her in ant. The landscape, bright with the gav tints of autumn, opened charmingly to their view. Swallows darted hither and thither through the clear blue ether, making ready for their flight to southern climes; the bells were chiming to early mass, from every church tower. But Sarah heeded not this fresh and lovely world through which she speeded, for her eyes were heavy with tears. For a while Heimbl took no notice of his companion's sadness; but, as the horse was proceeding slowly up a hill, he could no longer refrain from some attempt to cheer her

up,

"Now, my little lady," he said gaily, "let us have done with sighing and with sorrow.—Dry your eyes and look about you. See what a glorious world it is, how glad and bright it all looks.—And you are going to another land that is just as fair as this. A grand country, a fine people, where somebody is waiting for you too. Now try and cheer up, there's a good little lady!"

She shook her head sadly.

"Look here now," he went on, "Why who would ever have supposed that I, Heimbl, should turn my back on my native land here, and taking all my goods on my back, like the snail, wander off at my time of life, in search of new pasturess. Yes, indeed, just when I was thinking, too, of retiring to some warm little nest in the country; and yet, you see, there's no tear in my eye—Why, I whistle all my troubles down the wind, because my conscience tells me I'm doing the right thing. You must just try and do the same, little lady!"

"How good you are!" she said, and she gave him her

hand gratefully.

"Never mind that! Henrici is my friend, he has my word of honour that I will take thee and the little one safely to him, so here I am—I knew he was a fellow to get along well; you see, he has made quite a position for himself already in Augsburg. He says he can easily secure me a berth, too. Patience, patience! We'll soon be at Kusstein and across the frontiers. Look out for the white and blue posts—that will mean that we're in Bavaria; your tears should stop, little lady, you see anything blue and white, were it but a white kerchief or a pair of blue eyes!"

Just at that moment the horse shied so suddenly as to

put an end to Heimbl's well meant attempts at consolation.

"What on earth possessed her to stick herself right under the beast's nose? No wonder he shied!" he muttered as he gathered up the reins. The figure he had apostrophised rose from the road-side and came up to the carriage. A brown cloak it was wrapped in fell off, and two aged arms were stretched towards Sarah. In a moment the young woman had sprung to the ground, and she and her infant were clasped to her mother's breast. Both were too much agitated for many words, but Rebecca gave her daughter a bundle she had been carrying hidden under her mantle, "Take it, it is thine, my daughter," she said, "and oh! my Sarah, think sometimes of thy parent. The God of our forefathers keep thee! I bless His holy name that He has allowed me to once more look upon thee-May Jehovah watch over thee, my dear one!"

The poor old woman then turned in amongst the trees and soon was hidden from their eyes. Sarah wept now unrestrainedly, Heimbl made no further effort to comfort her for the present.

That morning, Biener's cell was entered at daybreak by a company of soldiers. For some time previously there had been a stir, a sound of voices outside. A young peasant with a long fruit basket strapped upon his back had been accosting each man who came by, inviting him to buy, and praising his own wares. A handsome looking young soldier, who was lounging near the gateway, came up to inspect the merchant's plums more closely. "Try them, Sir," he said, "I'll give you good measure, no stint."

"'Tis enough to give a man the stomach-ache to look at your trash only!" cried an older man.

"Well, that's not my notion at all," retorted his younger comrade, "By the time we get to Hall the sun will be high, there's not a tree to shelter us as we march through the fields, 'tis my belief these plums would be mightily refreshing, now. Here, my man, there's a half tester for thee. Fill my cap, I can stow them away afterwards in the saddle bags."

The young peasant readily complied, filling the man's steel cap to overflowing with the ripe plums. "Yes indeed, friend," he remarked as he did so, "thou art quite right. 'Tis no joke going through parade duty in that tight uniform on such a hot day as this promises to be."

"No such luck as parade, we've got to march all the way to Hall, with a prisoner of State. A nice tramp we shall have of it too!"

"The business is not altogether to thy taste then?" asked the young peasant, looking keenly at the man.

"Why should it be? but orders must be obeyed."

"And who may this State prisoner be, then?" asked the peasant carelessly, while arranging his fruits to the best advantage.

"That I mustn't say; there are hard penalties for blabbing. Thou may'st guess it is a man of some consequence or he wouldn't have a strong escort like this to guard him."

"Yes? Well, of course it can be no business of mine, but one can't but feel sorry for any great man in trouble. When I get home to Meran folks will ask me who he was."

"Leave that young fellow alone!" cried the older soldier,—"unless you're disposed for a turn at the treadmill—and you, my fine fellow, who seem so eager for news of what doesn't concern you, just you mind your own business. Those plums may cost you dear enough before all is over, I can tell you."

There was a movement now. Rudolph's heart throbbed almost to suffocation—for it was indeed the Chancellor's son who waited there—it needed all his self-command and fortitude not to betray himself when he saw his father's tall and dignified form approaching; when he heard his voice.

The soldiers had mounted their horses. Turning to Seiler, as he noted the strength and accourrements of the party, the Chancellor said,

"What means this? Whither are you about to take me? I decline to move, until I know where I am going to."

"I can't say. All I know is that my orders are to bring you out and convey you away from this place."

"Strange! If I must leave Innsbruck, may I not at least write to my family and tell them where I am going to that I may not be utterly lost to them? I have desired to see you for an hour past, that I might ask you for writing materials."

"Very sorry—none are at hand," replied Seiler.

"No writing materials in the government offices?" cried Biener, looking at him indignantly, "when the whole of the State papers are engrossed here! Man, can you not invent some better pretext for disobliging me than that?"

Seiler, pretending not to hear, called out loudly,

"What's amiss? What need is there of all this delay?"

"There's a waggon blocking the way. We'll have to wait till the road is clear," said a soldier.

"No! that can't be; the dragoons can wait. We'll find another road for the prisoner."

The soldiers seemed reluctant to stir; and Seiler, much against his will, had to quit the Chancellor's side for a moment.

Rudolph instantly drew near his father.

"Your honour hasn't need of any plums?" he asked. Biener recognising him trembled to think of the peril he was in, "Thou here?" he whispered.

"Your honour may need them, 'twill be hot presently. Take some, your honour," the boy said. Biener took off his hat and held it out to him. As he filled it, Rudolph whispered hurriedly, "Father, don't be angry; I must speak with thee, for I have been so dreadfully unlucky; I have lost the memorial. It dropped, I'm afraid, when I was jumping out of the window. I went back and searched everywhere—I couldn't find it anywhere!"

"That is indeed a misfortune! Waste no more time seeking for it, my son; it has been found long since. There's nothing for it but for thee to make for Vienna with all speed and get speech of the Emperor. Tell him everything. Is the Duke here?"

"They expect him back to-day, so I hear-"

"Ah! that accounts for all this haste! I am to have no chance of appealing to him. My son, do not delay one instant——"

"What's this? what business has that fellow here?" cried Seiler, hurrying back at this moment. Rudolph had already shouldered his basket; even while the Marshal was speaking, he had dived under one of the horses and was gone. Biener held out his hat saying, "Are plums a forbidden luxury?"

"Yes, they are!" cried the fellow roughly, and he seized the Chancellor's hat and flung its contents on the ground, "Who can tell what treasonable stuff may be amongst them. I am answerable for the prisoner; my head is forfeit if he escapes. Forward, my men! March!"

He led the way, turning sharply down a narrow alley

with high walls on each side of them where they had to walk in single file.

"Why by this bye way?" asked Biener, "I am not a criminal, I do not fear the light of day. Why am I to be taken through this evil looking den? Where will it lead me to?"

"It is called the stove-pipe, it may be a trifle narrow and dark, to be sure, but then all roads lead to Rome. Who knows but this one may lead to Vienna?"

"I see—My poor Rudolph may well have sought in vain for the memorial," murmured Biener. "Well then, go on.—The clouds are gathering blacker and blacker—my very path is dark. Malignity and enmity encompass me round about, yet I will not falter or fall by the way. I will try to think of the white courser in the allegory. The goal may yet be reached—Time and patience may yet enable me to rise above my worst foes," he added, to himself.

They iwound about, by the backs of houses, through noisome courts and alleys, till at last they emerged under a gateway near a church by the river's side. Here a closed carriage awaited them. Biener was commanded to get into it; the Marshal followed and seated himself facing his prisoner. The poor Fidel had been following close at his master's heels all this time; he tried now to jump in after him, Seiler gave him a savage kick, "Do not touch my dog!" cried the Chancellor, "You shall not treat him as a treasonable person also!"

The fellow could not help feeling a little ashamed of himself; he drew back, and the good dog leaped in and stretched himself at his master's feet.

They then drove away.

Biener closed his eyes that they might not behold the person before them. It might have been some beneficent influence of the fresh morning air, or simply that he was worn out by previous vigils; but the slumber he had at first feigned soon became profound; it lasted, despite the rattling of the carriage, the tramp of horses' hoofs, the shouts of the men, until the cavalcade suddenly stopped. In his dreams he had been in the dear home-circle—even Dr. Wardtell had been with him. When he opened his eyes the revulsion of feeling was terrible, Seiler was standing by the carriage door requesting him to alight. He looked round,

"Is not that the peculiar tower on the walls at Hall?" he asked, "Why have I been brought hither?"

"You have a little farther to go yet," said the men, "Do you see that vessel yonder? You are going to embark in her, if you please."

"And what is our destination then? I will no longer consent to being sent on like some bale of merchandise. I refuse to go on board that vessel, unless you tell me where it is to take me to."

"Then we must carry you, that is all."

"You may try it! I will summon the people of Hall, I will make my protest to them!"

"We've provided against that possibility, my good sir. Take a look here—the town is well guarded.—And how can I tell you what I do not know myself? We are to drop down the river with the current till we hear a cannon fired on shore, then we are to disembark."

"What can all this portend?" said Biener to himself, as he paced up and down on the river's brink. "Of what do they accuse me? What do these secret, mysterious arrangements mean? Do they really mean that I am on the road to Vienna? Oh no! that would not suit them at all. They are cutting me off from all communication with Innsbruck; they are a raid of the citizens interfering in my behalf; they mean to so

guard the ears of Ferdinand so that I can have no chance of reaching them."

It was useless now to resist. When all was in readiness he embarked, strictly guarded, in the little vessel. They weighed anchor, the sails filled, and they began to sail down the stream rapidly. Its banks were guarded by a troop of horsemen, so the inhabitants did not venture near. A few did remark that something strange was going on, and of these few persons one might have frustrated all their schemes if only he had been a more influential man.

Gödel the brass-founder chanced to have come to Hall to hang a church bell that morning. Happening to look out over the river, from the tower, he was distressed and alarmed beyond measure to see the Chancellor a prisoner, strongly guarded and about to be conveyed to some distant place. He knew nothing absolutely of what had occurred, yet strange rumours had been afloat for some days past in the city. It needed short reflection to make him hasten to his employer, tell him that urgent business called him home, and order his horse to be saddled. In a quarter of an hour, while the soldiers were refreshing themselves at the ale house, the old man was speeding to the capital.

The little ship meantime, was gliding safely and pleasantly down the river. On this brilliant autumn morning, the picturesque banks of the Inn looked their best. As one lovely reach of the winding stream followed another, and mountain after mountain unfolded itself to their eyes, it might have almost seemed to be a pleasure party. At last the bald head of the Scheitl and the rugged summit of the Keller-joch peered down over the brow of a rock which rose precipitously from the river's brink.

The towers of Schloss Trayberg stood out suddenly

from the dark Kaiserjoch, as they rounded a point, the . grey mass of the Kropfsberg, the ruined stronghold of the good knight George von Trendsberg, confronting them. The next bend of the river opened to their view green woods embosoming the little church of Margaret's, while at each moment a huge rocky buttress crowned with a strong fortress was drawing nearer and nearer to them. The roar of a mountain torrent had been audible for some time, and a few more minutes revealed the deep gorge through which it has cleft its wav from the distant Achensee to fling its waters into the Inn. The bright waters of the Zillerbach next appeared, leaping gaily through the green meadows to add their volume to the great river, and here the bold promontory of the Zimmermansberg stands out far into the stream which eddies away from its feet. Just as this bluff is passed the town of Rattenberg becomes visible. gathered round the crag on which its gloomy castle stands. Its square keeps, its flanking wails and battlemented towers, the encircling moat made this a place of great strength. It sat, throned upon its lofty eminence, a monument to the skill of its first founders, the all conquering Romans.

As Biener gazed up at this impregnable building, his thoughts went back into the far past. Suddenly a flash was seen, a cloud of smoke floated out over the waters, the report of a cannon echoing from shill to hill, was flung back a hundred times from rock and wall,

"Methinks that is our signal, brothers," said Seiler,
"Lie to! See you don't miss the landing place.—That
job's safely done, thanks be to God for it! I will make
a pilgrimage and give a present to the Mariners' Church
in acknowledgment of it."

As if in some horrible dream, Biener felt himself being drawn closely in beneath those frowning walls and

battlements. They were evidently expected, for, as they looked, the portcullis was raised, the drawbridge lowered, and a body of soldiers rode down the steep and winding road that led down to the town. Biener was landed, with his small personal effects, the men had rapidly closed in round him, they escorted him up to the fortress.

Fidel, barking joyously, sprang on him, licked his hands, and testified his joy by a thousand contortions of his body. Biener patted him fondly "Thou good old friend!" he said "thou art like the plank to which the shipwrecked sailor clings—the only remnant of the past left to me."

They crossed the first drawbridge, and passed beneath a dark resounding archway into the outer court-yard, surrounded by the dwellings of the men and stables for their horses. A second courtyard looked still more gloomy than the first; but when the inner court was reached, it was light and sunny; it sloped upwards to a round bastion that blocked the view of the town below.

To the left, a Gothic portal gave ingress to the chapel. The castle itself reared its huge bulk high above them, all its windows barred with iron, save those belonging to the captain's private residence. Here the party halted.

A bearded sentry pointed to a stone bench near the outside stairs leading to the first storey, "The gentleman may be seated here, if he likes to wait," he said. "The pinnace was in sooner than was bargained for, our captain went down to the town, and hasn't got back yet."

Biener had no desire to avail himself of this permission; he paced up and down the courtyard, casting anxious and inquiring glances up at the gloomy walls by which he was encompassed. A dark suspicion was growing on

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him—was he doomed to remain here, forgotten, forsaken, removed from every chance of recalling himself to Ferdinand's recollection, till his very existence should be blotted from the Duke's recollection. His enemies, aware that no real grounds existed for his conviction, had hit upon this mode of ridding themselves of him. The haste, the secrecy, of the morning's proceedings, gave countenance to this idea. He might linger on in this living tomb for years! He looked up and saw pale faces at many of the grated windows around. Strange! did not one bearded face nod to him, as if in recognition? Yes! he looked up again to that casement close under the roof; the action was distinctly repeated. The man's features seemed familiar to him—where had he seen them before?

He was pondering this question, when a tall, thin female form suddenly appeared on the steps above him. The long, clinging, black robe, the ashy pale face under a pointed hood, the skeleton hands, seemed rather to belong to some dead thing than to a living woman; yet this was indeed a living, wasted woman, with sunken cheek and unnaturally bright eyes.

"Come in here, sir," she said, "This waiting beseems you not, I will take the responsibility," she added to the sergeant who seemed about to interpose. Biener followed her up the stone stairs and into a small, vaulted room, comfortably furnished. She motioned to him to be seated in an armchair and, seeing his look of surprise, she said,

"Your Excellency would ask why does she do this?"
"Then you know who I am?"

"I come from Innsbruck, I do indeed know you. Oh! how often have I longed to express my gratitude to you, Excellency! Now at last I can do so; but oh! how dreadful it is to see you here."

"Gratitude? Who speaks to me of gratitude in such a place as this?"

"While I live, my gratitude to you can never cease—I am Aloysia Schmaus, but for you my wretched existence must have ended long ago—I am the wife of Neuhaus, the Governor of this fortress."

"Ah—I had forgotten—so it is—I fear you owe me little gratitude if all tales are true."

She looked down for a moment, then she said tremulously, "Who can truly say 'I am happy' in this sad world? Who deserves it? What I have to suffer is only a fitting expiation for the past. If only I am given strength to endure to the end, in some future life I may dare to hope for forgiveness of my sin. But for you, the waters of the Inn would have closed over my most miserable head, my eternal doom would have been sealed—" She stopped abruptly, overcome by her feelings.

"God has mercifully kept you from such a fate, not I," said Biener, much moved, "Yet I do not refuse your thanks. You have comforted me, you have reminded me that the Eternal Father is always watching over us, even here, within these walls. Let me take your hand, dear lady! May we never lose our trust in the Divine mercy."

She bent over his hand with almost passionate devotion, great tears fell on it, he too was much affected.

Suddenly the door was flung wide open, the thick ungainly figure of Neuhaus presented itself.

"A criminal intruding here, in my private room!" he shouted, his ugly face distorted by rage, "Leave us instantly, wife! There is a very different place prepared for this fellow; I can promise him one of our strongest cells, he shall see that I can be as good a gaoler as he upposed!"

Biener grew pale as death, then his cheek flushed, his lips quivered; but though his whole frame was agitated by the effort it cost him, he kept back the words that had rushed to his lips. Turning to Aloysia, who held, gasping for breath, by the table to support herself, he said very gently, "Never regret having shown kindness to a prisoner. How am I to forgive myself for having given you such a husband as this man!"

Neuhaus was nearly mad with rage. He had hoped to make the Chancellor wince by his brutality, but his outrageous words seemed to glance harmlessly from this armour of proof.

"Woman!" he cried again, "Dost thou not hear me? Begone! leave the room or I must thrust thee out of my sight, thou loathsome creature!"

He seized her by the arm and tried to drag her away as he spoke; but with one stride Biener stood before the poor woman; he thrust back Neuhaus, he offered her his hand to lead her out; but she declined with some dignity, saying,

"I am stronger now, I need no help," then turning to her tyrant she looked at him with so calm and brave an eye that involuntarily his vulgar soul quailed before it.

"This is my room," she said, "his Excellency is my guest, while he honours me by remaining here I will protect him from insult. The rest of the castle may be yours, here I am the mistress. I desire you to leave the room if you cannot behave with that respect and deference to my guest which his rank and misfortunes demand of us."

"Deference! That's pretty well over for him," sneered the fellow, "The wheel has turned, he who sat on the top is down in the mire now. In this place there are no guests; only prisoners. I say again, begone or I will call the men and have thee dragged off neck and heels." She would still have resisted, but Biener interposed, "Do not submit yourself to insult on my account," he said, "I reap as I have sowed, I see now how bitterly I must repent having given to such a man as this the power to tyrannise over poor prisoners, to double their sufferings. But lady, farewell! Try to think of me as resigned to my fate.—Captain, I am now at your service."

He went lout of the room with a manly, resolute step, and gave himself up to the guard without any apparent reluctance or excitement as he said this, Fidel following close at his heels.

"What cur is this? By whose permission has he got in? Prisoners can't keep dogs, let the hangman have him," called out Neuhaus when he saw him. The poor thing fawned on his master as if he had understood what was said. Biener stroked him, and as a man tried to carry him off, the dog showed his teeth and snarled dangerously.

"Let the faithful dog stay with me," said Aloysia, "I will cherish him till you are able to claim him again when you leave this dreadful place."

Neuhaus only laughed rudely, and proceeded up the stairs with Biener and the soldiers.

When they had reached the highest storey of the building they stopped before a door studded with iron nails, secured by heavy bolts and bars. When it was unlocked and opened they found themselves in a good-sized chamber, lighted by three grated windows, with bare but newly white-washed walls but containing only a straw pallet, a chair and a table. Flooded by the clear noonday sunshine, this miserable place looked its best. Not heeding Neuhaus or the men, the Chancellor flung himself on the wretched bed, while each bolt was ostentatiously tested by his gaolers. Thankful that he was at

length to be alone, Biener laid his head on the squalid pillow and gave way to sad and anxious thoughts.

Months went by, and still those massive bars were never drawn back. Winter wrapped the whole wide landscape in a snowy mantle. The towers of Kündel and Radfeld lifted their powdered heads from the valley, the mountains all around shone in virgin white, still no human face had the Chancellor beheld from the day of his arrival. His daily meal was pushed in to him, by some unseen agency, through a sliding panel, but no living being had he once seen in all those months.

He often asked himself, speaking aloud, what it might all portend, of what did they accuse him? How it could be that no tidings came to him, no greeting from the dear ones in his home? Each morning brought the hope that he might, at least, be that day called before his judges, each night he laid his weary head on his sleepless pillow feeling more deserted and alone, more devoured with anxious yearning to see his beloved ones.

The spring came round at last, the snow melted; the streams were unlocked and sparkled down the hill-sides; the swallows darted past his windows, twittering as they swooped joyously by to build their nests under the eaves and in the niches of the battlements. They brought, on their glad wings, no message from his home, no word to tell him that he was still remembered on that dear hill-side above the river; nor had he now any hope left that he might obtain help from Vienna.

The enforced idleness of his life was, perhaps, the greatest trial of all, to this man of untiring energy, of great intellect. That he who had been used to express himself so freely both by pen and word should be deprived of all means of utterance was the most cruel of all his sufferings. If the implements he craved had been granted

to him, how fruitful this long solitude might have proved! He was in the full vigour of his mental powers. All the years devoted to the culture of his intellect were bearing fruit. His richly-stored memory would have served him well had any means of writing been procurable.

Once, to his intense delight, he found a morsel of lead in the folds of his doublet. He grasped it as a drowning man seizes at a reed by the river's brink ere he sinks beneath the wave. With this he fell to writing on the whitewashed wall. His thoughts flowed rapidly; before long a poem in latin had been inscribed. It told of his wrongs, of his former life, of his sufferings. He became expert in the use of rude implements. When that precious morsel of lead came to an end he succeeded in abstracting a nail from the wood-work, and before long he could write with this almost as well as with his good goose quill of old.

At length the weary routine was broken, the clanging of the great bell, the one sound that had marked the lapse of the long hours and days, was varied. There was a trampling of horses' hoofs, a sound of carriage wheels. He guessed rightly that this would bring some change in his daily routine.

In one of the ground floor apartments an evil looking man was seated by a table. A crucifix was suspended from the wall, lights glimmered from empty skulls placed on each side of it. The room was dark and damp, the wainscot black with age.

The man wore spectacles, a pen was behind his ear, he was mending another. Near him sat Hippoliti, who had a number of documents spread out before him. A third person sat opposite to him, a meagre looking old man, chosen to assist in the coming examination simply in virtue of his deafness. Marc Antonio Bertelli, such was his name, tried to look intelligent, his one object in life

being to conceal the fact of his want of hearing. He was a man devoted, heart and soul, to the interests of Joshua Perkhofer, ready 'at his Bishop's command to stifle any doubt that might penetrate his wooden head.

Hippoliti was examining Biener's private note-book. Presently he went to a window, beckoning to the man in spectacles to follow him.

"What a clever devil you are, Strozzi," he whispered, "You have copied Biener's writing so perfectly that I defy

anyone to find out the forgery."

"I am charmed to hear it!" said the scrivenor, rubbing his long lean hands with a grin of satisfaction, "I think I may venture to assert without vanity that in this difficult and delicate art you will not match me, in this country at all events."

."A risky art however, my good friend! Beware how you use it. On this occasion it stands us in good stead, I confess, but if you ever should play us false I won't scruple, I can tell you, to let folks know where I discovered you."

"I am true as steel sir—The Strozzi you once knew exists no longer. He is now turned into honest Herr Stroz, a plain German notary, who can never forget how Mr. Fiscal Hippoliti befriended him, so just for this once he has revived an old accomplishment to serve his benefactor; better to be at large and prospering even in freezing Innsbruck, than at the galleys in warm, lovely, Italy."

A sound in the corridor made this pair of worthies hastily resume their seats, and directly after Biener was ushered in, guarded by a soldier on each side. One of these pointed to a bench near the table, inferring that the prisoner might be seated.

As the Chancellor was about to greet his judges he suddenly recognised Hippoliti. He started back, then remained gazing almost incredulously at the Fiscal.

Could this man be, indeed, sent here as his judge? Hippoliti knew well what this look meant; but he did not allow himself to change countenance.

Motioning to the Chancellor that he could be seated, he took up a paper and began to read in a loud voice as follows.

"Inasmuch as the Duke Ferdinand Karl, Count of the Tyrol, has deemed it expedient to institute criminal proceedings against Doctor Wilhelm Biener, formerly Privy Councillor and State Chancellor of his realm; I, as prosecutor for the Crown, am advised to open the said proceedings to-day. I therefore desire the said Doctor Wilhelm Biener to answer, as best he may, such charges as are about to be made on behalf of his Highness. Actuary, are you prepared to take down the prisoner's answers?"

"Let him in the first instance write down, that I protest against these proceedings as unlawful!" cried Biener indignantly.

"You will be wise to refrain from bombast," said Hippoliti, pompously, "Wherefore, may I ask, do you protest against these proceedings?"

"Because you are incapacitated from pleading in the case. No man can, in accordance with the law of this land, be tried by his acknowledged foe. You know but too well why you are mine. Shall I state that reason now?"

"You are wrong to suppose me your enemy, Doctor Biener. Any injurious words you may have spoken tome in former days have now faded from my recollection. I am only here as your judge. If that is your sole reason for protesting——"

"Most certainly it is not.—No court is legally constituted unless two witnesses are present. Where are your witnesses? By what authority do you venture to-dispense with them?"

"By the authority of an exceptional commission from my royal master."

He unfolded a document and read,

"It is our desire that you conduct this case in the manner you may consider most advisable. You are hereby invested with plenary powers; you may examine the prisoner in the manner which seems best to yourself, regardless of all protests. Any attempt that he may make to defy the Court must be silenced at once." He handed the parchment to Biener "You shall see for yourself that this is here *verbatum*," he added. Biener read it through. An emotion more of grief than of anger shook him for a moment,

"Poor young Duke! How they must have deceived thee!" he said to himself, "Yet how could they induce thee to sign such a document as this? A day will come, when thou would'st give years of thy life to undo what those few strokes of thy pen have now done."

"Let the prisoner refrain from irrelevant words and answer the court distinctly."

"Most surely I will do so. Even thus, delivered into the power of my foes with fettered hands by my much deceived sovereign, will I disprove these lies. You may have to repent of what you are doing. I do not recognise this as a legal tribunal; yet, that no further excuse may exist for my illegal detention in this fortress, I will now reply to whatever question you may choose to put to me."

"Your imprisonment will indeed soon come to its term, if your defence resembles your preliminary remarks" said the Fiscal. "First then, you are required to rebut certain charges brought against you and never disproved, during the reign of our late Duchess, Claudia de' Medici."

"Can it be possible that those puerilities have been

brought up again?" cried Biener hotly, "Is it ignored that in the hearing of the assembled Diet I was declared free from even the suspicion of guilt? The words of Duchess Claudia were written on the hearts of all her faithful subjects that day."

"I keep no register of such writings," said Hippoliti insolently, "The charges were never legally disproved."

"Does the public announcement of the sovereign go for nothing? Are Claudia's statements null and void?"

"Yes—the declaration of a lady ignorant of the forms of legal procedure goes for nothing. Justice has not been satisfied. Now, at your peril, decline to answer those charges as I state them *seriatim*."

"My defence is entered in the Archives. I decline to repeat it, to re-state my reasons for banishing the skittle-board, and so forth. The children have got their game again; that at least ought to content them."

"You were accused of holding secret and seditious meetings at the Büchsenhaus. You are now required to state the object of such meetings and to name the persons who then attended them."

Biener came a step nearer to the table; he folded his arms; he said, with a quiet smile, "I refer you to my former explanation. I decline to name every friend who has visited at my house. Duchess Claudia knew and approved of the object for which we met. Let that suffice for you."

"The inference is that those meetings tended to spread the Lutheran heresy in the Tyrol."

"Are you aware of the fact that for fifteen years I held the office of State Chancellor here in the Tyrol? I challenge you to produce one fact in confirmation of the absurd statement just made."

In all his long practice, the deaf Bertelli had never

before met with such a criminal as this. He looked scared, and whispered hastily to the Fiscal,

"A hardened fellow! He needs stringent measures. I see exactly how it is "

"You must lower this insolent tone, there are still graver charges against you than this, you forget the respect due to the court." said Hippoliti.

"I honour the law, I honour Him from whom the law proceeds; but I cannot acknowledge such a travesty of

justice as this to be law."

As he spoke, Biener drew himself up to his full height and looked steadily at the Fiscal, whose brazen countenance remained unmoved, however.

"Doctor Biener, you need not hope to shew your innocence by mere bluster, that only tends to increase the suspicion of your guilt. An evil conscience finds its refuge in arrogant denials. I would counsel you to answer more quietly and discreetly. Here is a book which was found in a secret recess of your desk. Do you acknowledge that it is yours? It is full of libels and lampoons on all the first men of the realm."

"You confess that it was found in a private drawer of mine. How then, could it injure any one? How should it concern anyone to know what I may confide only to the privacy of my most secret receptacle? Grant that those I laugh at know of it, does that subject me to criminal proceedings? These squibs were only meant for my private amusement, in my private capacity I am prepared to answer for them."

"Not only have you lampooned the Government. Royalty itself has not escaped your scandalous malignity."

"That is a lie," said Biener quietly, "I have little cause to laud Ferdinand, I would not shrink from the task of admonishing him if he were willing to listen to me, but I affirm that not for one moment, since my retirement from office, have I forgotten the allegiance owed by a subject to his sovereign. I have never uttered one injurious word, I have refrained from comment even when most tempted to disapprove."

"Needless assertions when here is written proof to the contrary!" cried Hippoliti, and he held up the little book in triumph. The actuary now began to write industriously. Biener looked sadly at the written page presented to him, he shook his head,

"And this you call proof?" he said, "Proof truly of my innocence, since my foes resort to forgery in their attempt to convict me! I never wrote one word of that."

"You had better be careful of what you assert, it is believed by experts that this is your writing," said Hippoliti with unabashed effrontery, "How could it be found in your note-book if you had not inscribed it there yourself?"

"You can answer that question better than I, Mr. Fiscal. My writing has been cleverly imitated I allow, I am an expert myself, but how do you explain this fact? I have not written in that book for a year past; this last writing is scarcely yet dry, there is sand upon it still."

For one instant Hippoliti lost countenance, then he rose and assuming a violent manner he cried, "What insolence! Do you dare to accuse your judge? Do you not try even to defend yourself? We shall hear next, that you disclaim your parody of the laudation placed below Duchess Claudia's portrait!"

"It is not my habit to deny the truth."

"Then you acknowledge it? You penned this libellus famosus, this scandalous libel? Why, that alone would convict you of high treason, crimen læsæ magistatis."

"Also of murder, arson and theft," said Biener smiling bitterly, "I criticise an inscription only to prove how inadequate it is, how readily it can be travestied, my wish, as is well known to all present, being to honour the dear memory of my late mistress."

"The animus is evident."

"I desired to shew that Claudia's brow was worthy of a nobler wreath; that the eulogy was wholly inadequate."

speak with unseemly familiarity of her

Highness."

"Sir! Everything has its limits, your power to co-erce me, my patience to endure have reached their limit now. Do not dare to utter such words as those again! All my life long it has been my wont to speak my mind. leave hypocrisy to you, and such as you. When the great ones of this earth are dead, we should be yet more careful to avoid that fulsome flattery which injures their memory than while they were here with us on earth. That cringing attitude which insults their dignity as human beings must revolt them still more when the external trappings are cast away, when death has levelled all mere outward distinctions. Claudia's memory is so precious to me that I will not endure to see it profaned by puerile attempts at praise."

The Fiscal rapidly turned some pages, raising his eyes

he remarked, after a while.

"The intention to disparage is apparent from the fact that you disseminated the injurious lines so widely."

"No human being has to my knowledge seen or heard If made public, they have not been so by my those lines. means. Those who were present when the lines were penned are accountable. I believe, Mr. Fiscal, that you have had them printed, that you have read them frequently at evening assemblies."

Hippoliti at last looked a little discomposed, "Absurd. ridiculous! You spread the libel yourself," he cried, "Contempt for the person of the sovereign, lese majesty. is as much a capital offence as high treason."

After a pause during which Biener succeeded, though with difficulty, in mastering his indignation, he said in a low voice,

"You are the representative of the crown. Since you have been given that authority, however unrighteously, you may use it; I am bound to submit for the present; but be assured you shall answer for this gross abuse of your office some day!—Future ages will know that Wilhelm Biener is no traitor!"

"You maintain, then, that this upright Wilhelm Biener has not made away with sundry treaties formerly made with the Grisons and now missing, purloined from the archives by this very honest person?"

"It is useless to tell you what you well know. Duchess Claudia destroyed those treaties in my presence, and in that of the Fathers Malaspina and Gravenegger."

"A probable assertion truly! You are careful to cite witnesses now dead, I perceive. You deny, also, that you received costly gifts of cattle from those provinces, doubtless?"

"You know that what you infer is false, you were told so at the Büchsenhaus. The receipts for payment of the dealers' bill are at your service."

Hippoliti only bit his lip.

"It is true, the dead cannot be called to witness, but I have a written receipt, given me by Duchess Claudia for the documents in question. This was, no doubt, found amongst the papers stolen from me last year."

"Will you be surprised if I inform you that no such paper as that which you name has been found, Doctor Biener?"

"It has been destroyed then—Yes! I might have known that it would be so—that was a certain result of the robbery of my papers. How can men of birth and position lend themselves to such deeds! My sovereign a youth once my pupil, permits them to be done—and this is the land of my adoption, my love! Oh, poor land! Thy mountain fastnesses, thine ancient bulwarks may tremble—decay—for thy truth and integrity, thy German worth, are sapped and undermined by the craft of the wicked! Thy manhood is gone."

Hippoliti collected his documents, "I close the proceedings," he said pompously, "This examination is ended. Further proceedings may elicit some confession from the prisoner. Our time has been wasted so far, since we have only had to listen to idle declamation. He has wasted our time and his own breath equally."

"It would be well for you if your conscience was as clear as mine!" said Biener, warmly, "No one is guiltless before the Eternal Father, but before you and the world I stand here blameless, innocent of all crime."

"We can but deplore your obstinacy, and if more stringent measures are used to bring you to confession you will have only yourself to blame for it," said the fellow audaciously and in a loud voice, so that Bertelli, who rose with him from the table might catch his meaning.

"To what measures do you allude?"

"A useless question! To the torture."

Biener's patience so long strained to the uttermost, at length gave way. In that tone of command he had been accustomed to use for years, with all the dignity of conscious rectitude, he exclaimed,

"My age and my position would alike forbid such an outrage as that! It dare not be attempted, in the face of all precedent. No! not even to sate the malignity of my foes. No law could sanction it—Yet—Who can tell? After what they have already done will they shrink from any outrage? May they not commit even that last cruelty under the semblance of justice?—My

limbs may be stretched on the rack, these hands, which have worked only for the good of the land, may be scorched; they shall not see me flinch or quail. I can die, and they shall know how I have despised this mockery of the law! Shame be to those who have misled my Prince—who have made him their tool, and yet I say, sacred be the person, the rule of my sovereign. Blessed be the memory of Claudia, noblest of her sex. Honored be the honesty, the integrity of our German citizens!"

With the step and bearing of a conqueror, Biener left the chamber and went back to his cell, closely guarded.

In spite of all his bravado, Hippoliti was baffled. Bertelli, who had heard nothing, shook his wise head and remarked solemnly, "A most dangerous and hardened fellow, the Duke will do well to get rid of such a malignant."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TRUE MAN.

NCE more it was high summer-tide. The sun, ere he sank behind the mountains at the close of a sultry day, was flooding hill and dale with crimson light, while the young moon hung, a faint and silvery crescent, in the cold eastern sky.

The cool, deep breath of evening sighed along the valley, and on its refreshing wing was borne up to the grated windows of the fortress the sound of rushing waters and of rustling leaves. The Chancellor, as he leaned his weary brow against the iron bars, felt its reviving influence. His eyes rested wistfully on the lovely landscape stretched beneath. As they followed the sparkling course of the river, it seemed to him that those glad waters hurrying onwards from beneath the walls of his home, must bring some message of love and greeting from those dear ones so long lost to him.

The weary months of confinement, the deprivation of fresh air and exercise, the want of all occupation, above all, however, the anxious fears that beset him continually as to the welfare of his family, began to tell on the strong frame of this brave man. He looked thin and pallid, his hair was now quite white, a thick grey beard concealed his mouth and chin, giving a certain severity

to his countenance far different from its old genial expression.

One by one the sounds of labour ceased to rise from the valley. Columns of blue smoke curled up into the still air from the cottages below, and lights began to twinkle in the windows. The Ave Maria had sounded from the church bells and even the distant hum of voices, as families gathered round the cottage table for their evening meal, could be heard at times.

Biener's heart was full, his eyes grew dim. For months past he had been tried by useless threats and vain attempts to wring from him some false confession. His strong mind, his simple integrity enabled him to rise; to spread the pinions of his pure spirit, and soar into an atmosphere far removed from these mean and subtle schemes of his enemies.

At one time he was given more liberty; his gaolers had orders to converse with him; to try to throw him off his guard; to entrap him into some admission of guilt. Once he did trust to their false promises. Accepting an offer of pen and paper he wrote a letter to his wife. The man who had promised to deliver it took it, as he afterwards discovered, to Hippoliti.—After that he rejected every favour they could offer him.

After thirty examinations, when upwards of five hundred questions had been put to him, the prosecution had not advanced even one jot, not one real charge had been substantiated. It seemed as though only some act of renewed violence, such as that by which he had been imprisoned, could further the ends of Biener's enemies.

He saw that their policy was to drag out the trial to an indefinite period; yet he gathered some little hope m the length of time that had been allowed to pass. Rudolph must surely have long ago reached Vienna. If his son had seen the Emperor and stated his case, an order for his release *must* come, sooner or later. When once released, to clear himself was easy.

He stood by the bars of his window gazing out half unconsciously into the deepening gloom.

Presently a clear manly voice began to sing somewhere not far off. At first he scarcely heeded it, some peasant was doubtless beguiling the way home with a song, some traveller perhaps singing by the way-side as he plodded along. But all of a sudden his cheek flushed, he pressed eagerly against the bars, he tried to look down—those words were familiar to him! that air, that voice!—

'Iron may rust, marble may break'

It was no dream—Yes! it was Rudolph's voice! Rudolph, his own good son—The hour of his freedom must be at hand!

He stood waiting—waiting for some signal. None came, all was again still as death. He must comfort himself with the thought that this was only a hint of something better to come.

That night, sleep refused to visit his eyelids. He tossed, fevered and weary on his straw pallet till the sun had risen. Then he sank into a broken slumber and heard his son's voice again in a dream. It whispered "Rise, father! let us go forth."

He had been aware of a gentle knocking on either the wall or floor of his cell for many nights past. The punctuality with which it recurred, the steadily increasing force of the blows, made him think that some one might be trying to open a passage and communicate with him; but as yet he had feared to respond. Might these sounds and Rudolph's signal not be in some way connected with each other

When at last the morning was come a new surprise

awaited him. The panel slid back as usual, a hand placed a basin of soup on the floor, but was not as usual withdrawn. Instead of that, it held out a sealed letter to him—a voice whispered hurriedly "Take it fast, Excellency! See—I am not Lenz. His legs are bad, I am on duty for him."

"Spare thyself the lie, thou spy!" cried Biener, "What have I ever done to thee that thou should'st try to destroy me?"

"Oh Sir! indeed, indeed, I only want to help you!" whispered the voice again, "Take it, oh! take it fast—only be quick—they must not see me."

Biener did take the letter, to open it could not hurt him. His limbs failed him—he trembled like a child—Sinking down on his bed, he tried to read the tremulous lines. They were written by his wife—Yes! there could be no deception this time. His doubts fled away as he read this tender cry, so full of love and pain, and yet she had striven to write so as not to distress him; he knew that full well.

"Dearest Sir—They tell me thou art in an evil plight, that thy dear life is threatened—Oh, my God! what am I to think? Not—oh not! that my husband can be guilty—Oh! what shall I do? I must only try to believe that there is still a God to whom we can turn in our bitter affliction.

"Thy most sorrowing wife, Elizabeth."

He read the simple heart-rending words again and again. He was shaken to the depths of his soul. Here was, at last, proof that he was remembered, the first line that had told him that in all these weary months one loving being was suffering with him. But little time was given him, however. The voice said again "Have you read it, Sir? What is the answer?"

"Say, who art thou? Can any human being here

really wish to help me?"

"Sir, I'm Peter Herzog of Seefeld. You may'nt remember, but a suit of mine against the Convent of Stams once came before you. First I won it and then I lost it, I never could tell how."

"And thou can'st wish to do me good? Why, I gave

judgment against thee!"

"Faith, Sir! that's no matter. 'Tis all one now. When the fathers saw it was all up with me they turned again, said they didn't wish to hurt me, only to prove their right and show me I couldn't expect to stand up against them, and they gave me a good bit of money, after all, for my land and the oil pit, and they gave my old father, poor old soul! a snug seat by the kitchen fire for the rest of his life, too. I travelled the country for many a day in the way of trade, and at last I got a berth here at the Castle. Sir—I had always a liking for you. I want to help you. I saw a young fellow peering in about the place two days ago. I slipped out and gave him a hint he had best be careful or the guards would seize him. He gave me that letter."

"Rudolph! Then he has returned—escaped—Did he

speak to thee?"

"Indeed he did, Sir. You are to be ready; we are coming to carry you off this very night!"

Biener attered a cry of joy. This sudden, most overwhelming news was almost more than he could bear.

"Yes indeed, this very night Sir! The Sheriff is to be married to night, our Captain will be at the wedding. Your turnkey is ill, so I will have it all in my own hands till we get to the first floor. I've contrived to loosen one of the rusty bars in a window there. Once we get out it won't be hard to get over the wall, for I've a friend on guard to-night in the courtyard who'll

look the other way. But hush! somebody's coming. God keep you, Sir, till evening!"

The good fellow then tramped away, and Biener was left alone, beset by a thousand conflicting hopes and fears. When he thought that so soon he might clasp his young wife, his dear son, to his breast, he could scarcely contain himself.

Could his deliverance really be at hand? Would he be then free to fly to Vienna where a simple assertion of his innocence might alone suffice to establish his honour, to frustrate all the malice of his foes?

But he wavered. Would he do well to give countenance to the charges against him by flight? Yet again, since violence had already prevailed against him so far, might violence not bring about his utter destruction if he remained here passively? What resource had he then in this desperate condition but flight? This was the longest of all the terrible days he had spent in prison, and yet how his brain worked! What fevered hopes and fears strove within him!"

At length the twilight, so eagerly looked for, came on. He gazed from the casement, hoping for one sight of his son, one word spoken by that dear voice. His ear was sensitively acute, but all remained silent as the tomb.

Suddenly that mysterious knocking, often before audible, was heard. It seemed this time to proceed from the wall of his own chamber, so loud was it. He placed his ear against the wall, he followed the sound, surely it came from behind the stove? He listened breathlessly—Yes! he could hear a smothered voice—it spoke his name! Rudolph—could it be his son? "Chancellor," it said,

"Who are you? Do you call me? What means it?"

"Come closer-Try if you can't loosen some of these

bricks—I'm in the chimney—You will hear all as soon as I can get out!"

Filled with amazement, Biener obeyed. It was not difficult to remove a tile—a few bricks were then loosened—Then the voice spoke again, and this time it seemed to be quite close to his ear.

"It is I, Franz Hartmann, the printer lad who brought

your Excellency that paper from Breisach."

"My poor friend! Can it indeed be you?" It flashed across his mind now, whose was the familiar face he had seen looking out of one of the windows on the day he arrived at the fortress.

"In spite of your Excellency's intercession, they sentenced me to imprisonment here for life. Time hung heavy on my hands, I was strong and able, and so I thought I would try if I couldn't by degrees work my way into the chimney flue, now that it isn't used. I managed it, I am going to climb up and be off in a day or two; but I couldn't bear to leave your Excellency behind me. Surely you have heard me scratching like a rat for ever so long now?"

"I have, and I've been told too who is helping you, I heard it this morning—"

"How could that be? Who could possibly know what I had confided to no living being till now?"

"I heard it from one of the turnkeys. Hav'nt you an understanding with him and with my son?"

"No! I know nothing of them. My own ten fingers are all the helpers I ever had."

"Ah!—Well then, my good friend, much as I thank you, I needn't give you any more trouble on my account. My son has a colleague in one of the men here, the two mean to get me out this very night—so you need think no more of me—I wish thee God-speed; don't delay on my account any longer."

The voice grew much troubled, "Excellency!" it said, "I am frightened for you. It is just the full of the moon, how can you escape with the whole courtyard as light as day? You must tell your son to wait."

"I cannot manage that, my friend."

"Then there'll be great danger—especially if many are in the plot."

"The man who spoke to me is trustworthy, I amquite sure of him."

"Maybe—'Tis a great pity, all the same—I had my heart set upon getting you out myself!—Well, if so it be we will escape together, at any rate. 'Tis a good job for me that I had got so far. If you had escaped and I been left all my toil would have been in vain. I would have been mewed up in a place without a chimney then, I guess."

"Hark! What's that? There they are—unlocking the door!"

"It's time I made my appearance then!"—Biener's-invisible friend clambered down the chimney as he spoke, and a clatter of stones was heard as he seemed to be descending rapidly.

The ponderous bars were cautiously withdrawn, the door gently opened. Within and without, all was dark. Biener groped his way towards the sounds. Soon his arm was grasped,—a voice whispered,

"Give me your hand, Sir!" and he was led out into the corridor.—"Step lightly, be careful! There! we'vecome to the stairs—they're broken in one place, hold on by the wall—now, that's right! one more flight andwe're down!"

"What's the matter? How you are trembling, my friend?"

"No great wonder! If we miscarry 'twill be no joke

for any of us; but don't you be alarmed, Sir. Here we are! Just a few more steps—"

As they reached the ground Biener held his conductor back for a moment, a bright ray of light was falling on the plastered floor of the corridor some way off.

"Only the lamp in the Chapel, it burns always, there must be a chink in the door," said Peter.

They crept on with the same stealthy noiseless tread. Suddenly a noise was heard, a loud and confused din of voices in the courtyard—Peter shrank back in terror.

"Holy Virgin!—What can have happened? Stay you there Sir! I'll go down and see—"

The good fellow went, and Biener groped his way back towards the stairs again.

At this moment a grating close to the door of the Chapel burst open with a crash. Hartmann's figure appeared, covered with soot and mortar, in the light streaming from the Chapel, "Excellency!" he whispered, "Where are you? Do you hear all that din? 'Tis just as I feared! They've caught your friends, they've taken them prisoners."

"God grant it may not be so!" cried Biener. There was a casement close to them opening on the courtyard below, he tried to reach it.

"Indeed it is so! I see them, Excellency! you must trust to me now—Here's a ladder—I made it out of my bed straw.—I can lower it out of this window.—See! 'tis not a bad ladder—you may trust yourself on it, I'll follow. Maybe the confusion will help us after all! If only you were safe at the bottom we could escape! I know a place where we can get over the wall, the trees in the Chapel yard will help us—"

Waiting for no reply, Hartmann seized the rusty bars of the window. He tore at them desperately, with all his might; at last the old mortar cracked, the stones

were loosened, they gave way; but at that moment the Chapel door opened, and Aloysia appeared, holding a small lamp above her head; as its light fell on them she instantly saw how it was. She ran to them, crying

"You are escaping! Oh, if I could but fly with you! but there is no escape for me but death—Go! May God keep you! Fly, for Neuhaus has returned. He is now in his first drunken sleep. Hasten, get you gone before he can awake,"

Hartmann had been dragging at the bars all this time. A loud barking suddenly resounded through all the vaulted passages.

"God help us! It is Fidel" cried the poor woman, "He wants to get to your Excellency, he will waken Neuhaus, his room is close to mine where the dog is shut up. Let me try if I can't get to him and pacify him!"

"It is useless—the very love of the poor brute has sealed my doom," said Biener.

As she reached the stairs she cried wildly,

"Christ have mercy upon us, he is coming—I hear him—Oh! fly—fly—I will keep him from you for a moment at least."

With the strength of desperation Hartmann assisted by Biener, had at last managed to loosen the bars. By their united efforts the iron stanchions gave way and fell with a crash.—But Neuhaus could be seen coming up the stairs.—He brandished a naked sword and swore horribly, in a half drunken frenzy.

As Aloysia, tall, white, and ghostly, suddenly confronted him he started back, it was but for a moment. He recognised her—he shouted,

"Out of my road, or I will thrust my sword through thee, thou fool! I knew thou would'st be mixed up in it!" "George!—George—Think of thine immortal soul—This once—only this once—be merciful! Be merciful as thou would'st obtain mercy—" She tried to block his way, as she stood clinging to the handrail; for a moment he was kept at bay. Then he struck her violently on the breast. He yelled, "Cursed woman leave my path or I swear I will murder thee!" The poor thing staggered and fell on the flags, blood gushed from her lips and nostrils, she groaned faintly, then lay motionless.

Hartmann had tied the rope ladder to one of the bars of the window. He had swung himself up, had seized the Chancellor by his arms, and was trying to drag him after, when Neuhaus, with a roar, rushed towards them.

"You need not excite yourself, Captain," said Biener very quietly, "I have been most unjustly imprisoned, I would gladly have escaped, but I know now that it is hopeless to do so, I give myself up into your power, I no longer resist—Look to your poor wife."

"Mind your own business my fine fellow! By this time you might have learnt not to meddle with what doesn't concern you. Here, my men! Walk him off to the guard-room. We'll find a safer cell next time for him."

The Chancellor followed passively, silently. As he passed the poor woman lying there unconscious, he stopped. A man raised her head, her eyes were closed.

"How blessed a thing it is for us poor mortal creatures that suffering has its limits," he said gently to himself.

Hartmann had hidden himself in a dark corner while the men were engaged with Biener. Suddenly he sprang on the window-ledge and swung himself out on the ladder.

"Who's that? Stop him! Stop him!" cried Neuhaus running back. He saw a man hanging half-way

down the wall "his journey to a better world won't be a long one, any way," said the wretch, and with one stroke of his sword he severed the ropes attached to the remaining bar.

There was a low cry—then all was still.

"March my men, and see your prisoner doesn't give us the slip again," said Neuhaus, coolly.

As they entered the guard-room Biener beheld, by the red glare of the torches, his dear son Rudolph lying on the floor fettered and in irons. The faithful Peter lay near him. When the youth saw his father, he struggled to his feet in spite of his heavy bonds. Biener with outstretched arms rushed to meet him; for a moment they were clasped in each other's arms. Silently, despairingly they clung to each other. At length an old sergeant said, "No fear that thou'lt escape my boy, I'll give thee a bit more liberty now Captain's gone. They called him just now to his wife."

It needed all his own great fortitude and strength to enable Biener to support his son in his despair.

"Thou must try to be resigned, my son," he said after a time, "We who know that there is a good God above us all must be brave—patient. Even the Pagans bore their troubles calmly. Is it not Horace who says acquam memento refus in arduis servare mentem?—Tell me how it was at Vienna? Speak, my son! Time presses—"

"Father, I never stopped or rested till I got there—It was all useless!—There is no help there—no justice."

"Wert thou wise as well as zealous, my son?"

"Father, Montecuculi has been vilifying thee all these last years. He has succeeded in poisoning the Emperor's mind."

"Could'st thou get no speech of the Emperor?

"They guarded every door, it was hopeless—hopeless!"

"Have I not one friend left there? What has become of Dietrichstein, Colleredo—good old Treutmansdorf?"

"He received me kindly, but I couldn't make him feel that thou wert really in danger. He insisted that I was needlessly frightened; was sure thou would'st soon be justified. Of course he never for a moment doubted thine integrity; but he feared he might only do thee harm by meddling in the matter, he said."

"Ay! An honest German could scarcely comprehend how far malice and guile can carry the wicked! I thank him at least for his trust in me—With God's help I will endeavour to be resigned—to endure to the end."

There was deep silence for a few moments, then the great bell of the Chapel began to toll, slowly, solemnly; some Christian soul had fled from its mortal dwelling.

The soldiers looked at one another significantly.

"That is the death knell, I'm thinking 'tis for the Captain's lady," said one.

Biener kissed his son on the forehead.

"All mortal suffering ends thus," he said solemnly, "a most unhappy life is now closed, a poor soul released from its agony. Let us try to be ready for the blessed change at whatever hour it may come to us. My dear son, try to be patient."

Duke Ferdinand's hunting lodge, of Martin's Bābel near Zirl, was filled with guests. Grooms and jāgers were lounging round a huge fire in the courtyard, at which great joints were roasting, flagons passing frequently from hand to hand, while their betters made merry in the dining hall upstairs.

The young Duke and Duchess, with a brilliant suite of courtiers, were enjoying a profuse and elaborate banquet after a long day's sport in the mountains. They were their hunting dresses still, though horns,

spears and couteaux de chasse were thrown aside and revelry prevailed. Glasses rang, evvivas resounded through the room; from time to time some hunting chorus or a gay march or réveillé, was played in the courtyard below, the sounds coming in by the open windows.

The guests were almost exclusively Italians. The soft obsequious manner of the Southern was much more to Ferdinand's taste than the blunt and straightforward speech of his Tyrolese nobles, so gradually the Germans were finding themselves excluded from all his more intimate gatherings as well as from the public offices of the kingdom.

The Duke had distinguished himself by a skilful shot to-day. He had brought down a buck in full career, just as the creature was escaping him. One more bound, and it would have been lost—or saved—but the aim was true, the bullet entered its heart, and sent it crashing down into the gorge below. The carcase, indeed, was so shattered as to be quite useless, but the royal shot was, none the less, extolled to the skies.

The wine-cup had already been circulating too freely. Ferdinand's eyes were sparkling, he was in his happiest mood. Duchess Anna's looks reflected those of her husband. He appeared devoted to his wife, lavishing those attentions and courtesies upon the young creature which she had at one time longed for so hopelessly. Anna felt so happy in this new state of things that she had lingered at the table long after it had been cleared by the attendants and fresh wine set down. At last, however, she retired, and the cup began to circulate more freely. Beakers were filled and emptied, the mirth grew fast and furious.

The Duke was not habitually intemperate, but tonight his cheeks glowed, he laughed loudly, his words began to come indistinctly. Having allowed himself to exceed, he soon lost all self-control.

The guests were breaking up into small groups. Three men had come out to the wide gallery and were lounging against its strong balustrade, overhanging the rocky gorge in which the turbulent waters of the Inn fretted and fumed, far below, as they rushed down the Valley. Ferrari, Count Luniati and a third who had been received with acclamation when he appeared a few hours before, were chatting pleasantly, as they enjoyed the grand panorama of mountain peaks now glowing in the rosy tints of sunset, and listened to the roar of waters far below.

"A marvellously grand country indeed!" exclaimed the stranger, "See those mountains bathed in the crimson afterglow; and what a river this is! Isn't that the Grieskar yonder? that huge peak far away, and the light point over there that sparkles like a jewel, is it not the metal dome of the church at Perfuss?"

"Why, Count Montecuculi! you might be a native of these parts you are so well up in them."

"Mountains and rivers don't change,—however mutable the human species may be. Why, I was told that the Duke and Duchess were about to separate, and behold you! I find them billing and cooing like a couple of turtle doves here!"

"Ah—changed times indeed! Once upon a time our young hero was fast in the toils of a certain Armida, a siren with an enchanting voice and melting eyes. The youth was bewitched, spell-bound, but, behold you! just as everybody said things were coming to a crisis, what happens? One fine morning the fair enslaver has vanished, not a trace of her left!"

"La strita. She had some scheme under it, I bet you."

"'Twas said she meant to drive away the Duchess and

persuade him to marry her left-handedly—Well! Behold you, one morning, he gets a letter—a fine letter,—stating that her conscience is so troubled that the fair Lucia can stay here no longer; moreover that she is so disgusted by the importunities of one Master Marello, who is trying to wed her, that she is fairly obliged to fly from the country!"

"Furbetto! He hasn't been in my service so long without learning a thing or two! Well? How did Master Marello escape the hangman?"

"He is like a cat, falls on his feet always. He told Ferdinand some cock-and-bull story about a fancy the Trentinara had had for one of his halberdiers, which put a spoke in her wheel. Then, being a very astute knave, he contrived to creep into favour with Duchess Anna. You know the Duke must always be under petticoat government of some kind. Well! His wife seized her opportunity, she was well backed up by Marello and here she is, mistress of the situation!"

Montecuculi laughed heartily, he was about to speak when loud voices were audible, ascending from the courtyard. Ferrari ran down the steps at one end of the balcony, to see what was the matter. He found Marello in high dispute with some persons who were trying to force an entrance at the gates.

"What means this?" demanded the Count.

"Here is a possé of citizen fellows, come all the way from Innsbruck, insisting that they must see sua Altezza the very time it is. They declare that their errand is so pressing it will brook no delay, and, late as it is, nothing will serve them but that I shall go and disturb his Highness!"

It was indeed Dr. Wardtell, Godel, Schorer and others who were trying vainly to gain admittance even now. Ever since the day on which the old brass founder had

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returned from Hall with the alarming news of the Chancellor's imprisonment-Biener's friends had been untiring in their efforts to obtain some information from Vollmar, Schmaus, or other influential persons, some assurance, at least, of their friend's safety. Invariably had they been met by smiling assertions that everything was proceeding in a legal and equitable manner; that the present Chancellor was as fully convinced of Biener's innocence as they were themselves, that he was as anxious as they could be to see him vindicated; but that it might be unwise, the Duke might resent it, if any departure from the established form of procedure were attempted. These honest, upright men did not at first think of doubting such kindly and, apparently They submitted, and tried to be sincere assurances. satisfied to wait for the natural issue of the trial. Ferdinand now so seldom resided at Innsbruck that an appeal to him was almost impossible. Of late, however, rumours of a darker and more threatening nature were rife in the city. The massive walls of Biener's prison could not entirely isolate him, after all. Accounts of the rigour of his confinement, the complete solitude, the dreadful ignorance of all that concerned his family, in which he was kept, even horrible hints as to his ultimate fate, were beginning to be rife. It was whispered that the judge appointed to try him was his personal enemy, that the trial was conducted with monstrous injustice. All this began to be buzzed about in Innsbruck, and made Biener's friends most anxious and alarmed.

A royal visit to Florence was in contemplation, so there was urgent need to delay no longer, and at length these devoted friends resolved to make a personal appeal to Ferdinand. They went up to the palace, in the first instance, but finding that the Court was residing for the present at Martin's Bäbel, they resolved not to risk even another hour's delay, and set forth bravely on the long, toilsome walk to the mountain castle, regardless of the perils of the darkness which might overtake them ere they could get back.

Seeing Dr. Wardtell's portly form towering over the

rest, Ferrari exclaimed,

"Impossible! At such an untimely hour I assure you Dr. Wardtell, it would be quite out of the question. His Highness could not see anyone to-night."

A peal of laughter issued from the open windows of

the dining-room as he spoke.

"His Highness may perhaps be not very seriously engaged, we will try, at all events, if he cannot be induced to see us. May we beg you, sir, to give way? I am sure that the Duke would not begrudge us a few minutes' interview if he knew how very urgent our business with him was."

"I have his imperative orders to admit no one, on any pretext, what your's may be of course I cannot tell."

"We have come to present a memorial to his Highness. It refers to our friend the late Chancellor of the Duchy, Doctor Biener."

"Quite impossible,—hopeless—out of the question! His Highness has decided to hear nothing, absolutely nothing, respecting Biener. If you are wise, Signori, you will abstain from meddling in that man's affairs. It is dangerous to have anything to do with criminals accused of high treason; justice must take its course."

"And that is precisely what we demand! Justice. She is blind, her scales weighed down with enmity—a scourge is in her hand—not a sword—now."

"Stand back, gentlemen! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves, you who are honest citizens. Do you profess to uphold a traitor?"

"Biener is no more a traitor than I am one myself, sir! He who says so lies—lies, I tell you—Do you persist in refusing to admit us, then? Have things in our native land come to such a pass that a German can only gain access to his sovereign by the favour of an Italian official?"

"Nonsense! Come at a seemly hour if you wish to be admitted. When his Highness is in the country he may at least hope for freedom from cares of State. Gentlemen, let me counsel you to go at once, and without further disturbance. Do not force us to put you out by the strong arm."

"No need, indeed, for that! Come friends—I take all here present to witness that we have been denied all access to our sovereign—A day may come; it will come too, most surely, when this unheard of proceeding will have to be accounted for. We know now, at least, who our enemies are!"

The friends turned away from the gates as this was said, and turned their faces towards Innsbruck without another word.

"A fine pass things are come to, if fellows like these suppose they can dictate to the Duke," said Montecuculi as Ferrari joined him and Luniati again, "and we have no one to thank for it but the very man they came to intercede for. All this treasonable, insubordinate spirit that is abroad originated with Biener."

"He is gagged at last, can hurt us no more."

"Yes—the right party is in power now. That is why you see me here. As long as the Dowager lived it was hopeless to attack him. His fascinations were too much for her. Now the Colossus lies in the dust."

"I can't but be sorry for him," said Luniati, "He has a fine wit of his own. His conceits used to amuse me vastly, and, to tell the truth, he managed to bring about

a unanimity in our counsels that we lack now most grievously. To be sure, he had an unfortunate aptitude for making enemies; the clerical party abhor him because of his toleration, the nobles hate him because he tried to set up the Commons in opposition to them. We Italians naturally hate him because he hates us. Why, when that little book of his was discovered and made public, it was just as if a swarm of wasps had settled on us all round. My word, those were stinging sarcasms! Taking everything into account, then, the only wonder is that he should have remained in power so long."

"How does the trial proceed?"

"Here comes the man who is conducting it, you can ask him," said Ferrari, as Schmaus came out and joined them,

"How now President—Isn't the wine to your taste? How do you come to rise so soon from table?"

"The wine is superb, admirable. It has been a feast fit for Lucullus, yet somehow I had no stomach for it to-day. The fact is, I am fairly worn out, harassed, tormented by this anxious, responsible business—"

"What, Biener's trial? How does it progress, by the way?"

"Yes, that is the worry, the trial. Just think, we may be obliged to go over the same ground again after all the labour we have spent on it—"

"But how can that be?" cried the three Italians in a breath.

"Here is an express come from Vollmar with the sentence; but who is to get his Highness to affix his sign manual to it, I should like to know?"

"Great news! And what may the sentence be?"

"Death-He has been found guilty of high treason and lese majesty."

For a time there was silence. In spite of all their

hatred of the man, this dread consummation, brought about by their plots, their malignity, struck these men with some sense of awe; some vague feeling of remorse stirred them for a few brief moments. With an attempt to speak lightly Montecuculi said, at last,

"Well then it is a complete success! We congratulate you, Mr. President, you must have conducted the case with wonderful skill. Samson in bonds, the Philistines triumphant!"

"Nothing avails without the Duke's signature."

"That can easily be managed, the hour is most propitious. Let me have the document; we will return to table. Stand by me staunchly, and I promise you all will go well."

The orgy had by this time reached a height seldom seen at Ferdinand's court.

The Duke, it was true, loved pleasure as much as he hated business; but his heart was kind and good; after being led away to do what he had never meant to indulge in, he invariably suffered from the pangs of remorse. Just at the present time he was enjoying the rare treat of an easy conscience, for he was free from the bonds so long enchaining him. Lucia Trentinara had disappeared, and what might have been only a proof of the fickleness of Ferdinand's character now appeared to himself in the light of a virtue; he had ceased to regret her. This self-approving humour assisted the fumes of the wine and intoxicated him wholly. He was in that condition when moral responsibility ceases and violent deeds are often done. Each of his courtiers vied with the other in flattering him. A Florentine, recently imported, had just compared him to Augustus; another hoped that he might live as long as the patriarchs that the golden age might be prolonged. The room was ringing with evvivas, the clash of glasses and the blast of horns.

Montecuculi seated himself nearly opposite to the Duke. Amid this riot and revel he alone looked sad. He shook his head, and muttered a few words in the ear of Schmaus who sat beside him. At last his object was gained; Ferdinand sprang to his feet and cried angrily,

"What means this? Count—do you refuse to drink

our toast?"

"Your Highness is not in earnest?" said the Count with well feigned concern.

"No excuses! answer—or bear the weight of my most august displeasure!"

"Your Highness commands, I must obey, however reluctantly. No further proof of my devotion to your house and person are needed, surely. Well—I looked grave because I thought how likely it is that your innocent mirth may be misconstrued, maligned."

"But how so?"

"The harmless pleasures of the hour are food for venemous tongues, they may libel you—lampoon you."

Ferdinand laughed aloud. "No fear of comments now. The kill-joy is too safely mewed up to indulge his bitter wit at present."

Montecuculi shrugged his shoulders doubtfully.

"Your Highness underrates the audacity of that person," he said, "What things have I not heard, even in the brief hours since my return! That letter which he penned to you on his dismissal—"

"Silence!" cried Ferdinand in a transport of rage, "How long is that trial likely to drag on, Mr. President?"

"It is finished, your Highness. The verdict has just reached us, the sentence has been pronounced; but I was loth to disturb you at such an hour as this with State affairs."

"And what is this sentence?" demanded the Duke.

"Death-death by the executioner."

"The case has been investigated thoroughly?"

"With all possible legal assistance."

"He has been pronounced guilty? Convicted?"

"Convicted of high treason, lese majesty. No power will make him confess his guilt. His judges, two impartial men, declare that he persists in denying all the charges, while each examination brings fresh proof of their validity."

Ferdinand's eyes sparkled, his voice trembled,

"He denies everything, yet he cannot produce my mother's receipt for those parchments?"

"No such receipt is to be found amongst his private papers," said Schmaus, after a slight pause, "Yet his arrogance is just as great, he holds his head as high——"

"It shall soon be laid low!" cried Ferdinand "If it refuses to bow it shall fall—Give me the sentence, let me affix my royal warrant to it."

Marello, who was in waiting, eagerly offered the Duke a pen, Schmaus had placed the necessary document before him. He wrote his name hurriedly, excitedly, then, pushing back his chair, he signed to the lackey to bring lights and rose to retire to his chamber. His courtiers stood aside and bowed profoundly as the young man passed unsteadily down the hall, preceded by Marello.

"There is not a moment to lose!" cried Montecuculi when he was gone, "Let an express saddle, let him use whip and spur; the authorities must have this instantly.'

Silence had fallen on the castle. The revels were over and all were sleeping heavily, when a sound of trampling hoofs was heard resounding up the valley. It approached nearer and nearer and at last, in the stillness of the night, the bell tolled, and horsemen rode in under the great gateway. Ferdinand, wakened from his heavy sleep, sent off Marello, in all haste, to ascertain what so untimely an arrival might portend. Before the lackey could return, however, hurried footsteps and eager voices were heard in the corridor, and opening his door the Duke, to his amazement, saw his brother Sigismund standing before him.

As the two stood gazing at each other the contrast between them had never been more marked. Ferdinand, only half sober, looked fevered, excited, confused. Sigismund had a dignity, a serenity in his bearing that almost reproached his elder brother.

It was with difficulty and some confusion, that Ferdinand tried to find words to greet his unexpected visitor,

"My brother—I did not expect to find thee thus," said Sigismund.

"And why so? Hast thou become an enemy to mirth, since thou art a Bishop?" replied Ferdinand.

"To such wasteful revelry as I see traces of here I certainly am an enemy. Ferdinand, how can'st thou feast and make merry at such a time as this?"

"I fail to understand thee."

"Frightful tidings have just met me-I have been at Passau on ecclesiastical business, I had meant to look in on thee before returning to Vienna; but this news which I have heard has hastened my arrival. Ferdinand, can it be true that criminal proceedings have been entered against Chancellor Biener? That he is in prison, his life threatened?"

"I have just signed his death warrant," said Ferdinand imperturbably.

"And thou can'st be gay at the moment thou hast confirmed so horrible a sentence?" cried his brother, with a look and tone of horror, "Could'st thou raise

the wine cup to thy lips with the very same hand that had sanctioned so bloody a deed? Brother! Even if he was guilty—tenfold guilty,—the thought that such a man as that could be so, might have stayed thy hand. But Ferdinand, how if he were innocent?"

"He is guilty. It has been proved."

"He was delivered over into the power of his enemies. Their very names attest it. Oh! how could'st thou do it? The people of this land believe in Biener's innocence. Just now I met a number of respectable men from Innsbruck who had been deputed to sue for Biener. They had not been permitted even to see thee. The Italians turned them away from thy gates!"

"I heard nothing at all about them," said Ferdinand, in some confusion.

"And that is just why I have come at midnight, like the voice of thy conscience, to tell thee what flatterers keep away from thee—Brother, think of our childhood, Recall what this man, whom thou hast condemned as a felon, then seemed to you and me!

"The great statesman, our father's friend and true servant, our dead mother's devoted servant—our own tutor! For which of all these past benefits of his would'st thou see him murdered? Is he to be put to so horrible a death because he may have sometimes spoken more freely to thee than thy temper could well brook?"

"Those days are long gone by, even angels may fall," said Ferdinand gloomily.

"And they should then be judged of reverently by men. I have loved this man from my childhood up. He has been the ideal of my youth, like that true Hans von Mullinger, the noble, brave preserver of our ancestor. Biener is the true man. I am not deceived in him. I know that my childish judgment of him is

not false. Brother, I implore thee to recall that sentence! Let the case at least be tried by impartial judges. Give me the conduct of it. I would no more allow the dignity of our house to suffer, than would Biener himself. Do not sully thy reign by an act like this; do not dishonour the memory of our excellent mother by it!"

Ferdinand paced the room in silence; the fumes of the wine were beginning to dissipate.

"But I cannot do that—justice must take its course," at last he said.

"Then let it be granted to me as a special boon—let me sue for it as thy brother!—Well then, if thou dost appeal to justice, so do I—As a prince of the blood I demand this thing of thee—Duke Ferdinand Karl, rescind this warrant—Biener is falsely accused."

"A daring assertion—Thy infatuation for this man accounts for it, I suppose."

"I repeat it, he is falsely accused. If I can give thee proof that one of the gravest of the charges against him is groundless, wilt thou then believe that the others may be so also?"

"Impossible!"

"He is charged with having made away with certain treaties in order to restore them felonicusly to the people of the Grisons; he maintains that our mother burnt those treaties, and gave him a formal acknowledgment for them; is this not true?"

"Quite true."

"Well! Our mother did really and truly receive and burn those parchments—really and truly! Here is a living witness of the fact!"

"Can'st thou raise the dead as witnesses?"

Sigismund went to the door; he opened it, and there stood old Schildhofer.

"Schildhofer? How did'st thou; get here?" cried Ferdinand.

"Don't take it amiss of me, lord Duke-I dare say I am come at an awkward time; but I was on my way here, when I met the young Prince, and he brought me with him. In all the land the talk is that Chancellor Biener has been called a traitor to thee and to the Tyrol. The people won't believe it can be true, for they remember how stoutly he has stood up for the honour of the Crown in many a difficulty, and what a good friend he used to be to Duke Leopold and Duchess Claudia. When the rumour of it came to our valley I said I didn't believe it.-You see, I know that man better, I suppose, than anybody else in all the land knows him-we were always friends-so off I set at once, and here I am to tell thee all about it. I was present myself! I know all about that affair of the parchments—I was standing in one of the windows, nobody heeding me, and I saw it all with my own eyes. The Chancellor reached Madame Claudia the parchments-five of them I think-and she just flung them into the flames."

The old man's simple words were quite convincing. Ferdinand stood silent and confounded.

"There! What can'st thou say to that?" cried Sigismund eagerly, "If the chief accusation falls to the ground, then surely the others will all be found to be false also?—Ferdinand—brother,—if thou should'st ever have believed this thing thou must now indeed acquit him! Why—it would sully our mother's name if thou didst not pardon Biener! In her name, in God's name, whose minister I am, I demand this of thee—Dost thou believe Biener to be guilty of this thing? If thou hast not that conviction of his guilt which alone could sanction thee in taking away his life—

oh! if thou hast not—I shudder to think what thou art doing—By all thy hopes of salvation, I conjure thee to burden not thy soul with so bloody a deed!"

In the fervour of his prayer Sigismund had fallen at his brother's feet. He stretched forth his arms to him—old Schildhofer knelt beside him.

"Rise brother!" said Ferdinand tremulously, "Biener shall leave this land, I will never see his face again; but I do pardon him—Send an express to the Fortress of Rattenburg and tell him so."

CHAPTER XIX.

SIR THOMAS MORE.

THE turrets of the Büchsenhaus rose as peacefully from their encircling woods as though it still remained the happy home it once had been. The way-farer, as he plodded by on this cloudless July day, might surely have regarded so sweet a spot with longing eyes, and envied its possessor so beautiful a home.

Not a sound broke in upon the stillness of the noon-tide hour. Even the song that used to cheer the men, at work in the brew-house, was hushed in pity for the gentle lady who sorrowed within these walls. The men, indeed, seldom felt disposed to sing. They Ioved their good master and pitied his most miserable wife, who wandered, restless and pale as some troubled ghost, through those rooms where she had lived so happily with him whom she loved so passionately.

She was sitting in the window of the turret chamber, gazing eagerly down the long white road that wound along the valley towards Muhlau. Now and then she held her breath and turned even whiter than before; but the longed for messenger did not come. Hope was dying within her, for over and over again she found the object she had imagined to be the bearer of glad tidings, was but the waving branch of a tree.

Had Rudolph's brave attempt failed? Dare she hope that, in a few hours, the pain and suspense of all these weary months might be at an end, forgotten in the

rapture of seeing him once more free? And what if Rudolph had failed? Would his bonds be then but the more pitilessly rivetted? As these conflicting hopes and fears chased each other through her worn out brain, she sank into an uneasy slumber, exhausted as she was by the long strain, the sleepless nights, their haunting visions. But suddenly she started up wildly and rushed to the room door; she had heard a man's footstep on the stairs—She flung it open and beheld—the Fiscal Hippoliti, standing before her in a cringing attitude.

She shrunk, as from the sight of some loathesome reptile; then drawing herself up proudly, she signed imperiously to the man to leave her presence.

"You are bold, Sir, to dare to enter this house!" she

"No—no, most gracious lady," he said, "not so, I can believe indeed that I am not quite the visitor you were expecting to-day, and, indeed, it grieves me to be the bearer of bad news from him. Yet, as it rests with me alone to turn your sorrow into rejoicing, I have ventured to brave your displeasure by coming to see you."

"Speak! Speak quickly then, I have little time tobestow upon you."

"You may possibly know that your stepson, Mr. Rudolph Biener, had a plan for releasing his father from the Fortress of Rattenburg; you probably do not know that he had succeeded in tampering with certain turn-keys and others and that last night had been fixed upon for the accomplishment of the plot. So tender-hearted am I, that I almost regret to inform you that this plot has failed—has been frustrated by the pitiless vigilance of the Commandant."

Elizabeth shrank back; her knees shook; the room seemed to turn round with her. She must have sunk to the ground but for the remembrance of her husband's

parting words to her; they rang in her ears and gave her a momentary strength—" Shew them that thou art my wife; do not gratify them by letting them see how thou sufferest"—She constrained herself; she said, though it was in a tremulous voice that she spoke,

"That will do Sir. I thank you; you can go, now."

"Though I regret to bring you such doleful tidings," he said in an insinuating voice, "I also am glad to think I might perchance become the means of bringing you both better days."

"You? you bring good days to us?"

"Your husband's position now is a most perilous one."

She smiled bitterly "Does that mean better days?"

"I cannot conceal it from you; his life is in danger."

She went up to him and fixed her great tearless eyes upon his face so searchingly that, involuntarily, his fell before their despairing gaze.

"That is a lie!" she said "my husband is innocent.

A just God is in Heaven."

"I only trust that your assurance is well-founded," he said, and he shrugged his shoulders "May I ask you on what ground—how do you know that he is innocent?"

"He has told me so himself."

He was just about to burst into a derisive laugh; but there was something so grand, so touching in her simple words, her unquestioning conviction, that the impious sounds died away on his lips.

"But at least you might be wise to confront the other possibility too," he said, "You ought to be willing to do your utmost to save him. Now I am ready to point out a way by which you may do so; think well before you reject it, for it is the only chance now left you of saving his life."

Seeing how eagerly she listened, how she hung on

every word he spoke; he went on with more confidence, "I think you know how long, how devotedly, I have loved you—I loved you from the first moment I beheld you; your beauty then bewitched me. You have spurned my admiration hitherto—and with needless scorn too. Just for this once, let me have the chance of telling you how it has been with me—Hear me just this once—Let me pour out my tale of passion—and the key of Biener's cell shall be in your hands to-day.—Think well before you reject my offer!"

A passion of shame seized upon her, her eyes sparkled, "Begone, wretch!" she cried, in a loud voice.

"Bethink yourself! Your husband is not at hand, as he was once—It is a question of his life or death."

"Go! go! Out of my sight!" she cried, her sick horror growing upon her every moment.

"And yet you say you love your husband? A strange love it must be, that can doom him deliberately to the block!"

"Our love would not be what it is, if such as you could understand it—Begone! At your price, I would not buy even his life."

"It is easy for you to be heroic. You are free, have all you need. The Chancellor, my good lady, is in prison; he is old, lonely, weakened by privation, consumed by hopeless longings——"

"Oh Wilhelm—Wilhelm! That I should live to hear this! and from him, too!" she sobbed in a burst of uncontrollable despair.

"The Emperor fails him; his son is also in chains, his friends have all been gagged. You only can save him. How can you have the heart to refuse to do it? You have only to stretch out your hand to me, and he is rescued—you cannot hesitate?"

"No! and a thousand times no! Torment me as you you a. S

will; there is a limit to all suffering—to all patience. Go to Biener—tell him how you propose to save his life, he will fling the same answer to you that I do! Leave my presence instantly, or I will call my people. You shall find that I am still mistress of this house."

Hippoliti turned and walked away slowly, silently, frowning darkly. In the doorway he encountered Franziska, hurrying to Elizabeth. The two women fell into each other's arms with a cry of despair. "Hast thou heard? Oh, my husband! My best beloved! He is doomed—" cried poor Elizabeth, "They may kill him—No soul is now left to help him, but we two! Advise, support me, dear one—We are all he has in this world now—everyone else has betrayed him."

"God will not allow it—He could not call us to endure so fearful, so awful a blow as that!"

They clung together for a time. Then Elizabeth sought the room where her boy was sleeping. She fell down beside his little bed, and lay there in a kind of stupor for hours.

Biener rose next morning with the dawn. He had contrived to replace his pencil with a morsel of lead, and the freshly whitened wall served him to reproduce that poem so ruthlessly obliterated, by order of Neuhaus, as soon as it was discovered.

So eagerly intent was he upon this work that he did not hear the lock turn, the door swing open; nor was it until the harsh voice of Neuhaus broke on his ear, with its jarring sound, that he looked round and saw his jailer's coarse face scowling upon him.

"Have I not given you orders not to deface or injure that wall?" the fellow cried.

"I am writing upon it, not injuring it" said the Chancellor gently, "Give me paper and I will promise you to respect the purity of your whitewash. It is too

irksome to me to remain unoccupied—Ah! I see 'twill not be for long now, that I shall have to bear my solitude——''

"What do you mean by that?"

"You bring me a priest—My bonds will soon be broken! You think I stand in need of spiritual support, that I may be weak, Sir?" he added, and he held out his hand to an ecclesiastic who had followed the Captain into his cell. The Father grasped Biener's hand warmly. He was a man well stricken in years, tall and thin, with a good face and something almost enthusiastic in the expression of his eyes.

"It is even as you have divined, my son," he said, "But what an inestimable blessing to find you thus resigned! My heart was heavy, my forebodings great, as I came up these long stairs."

"Thank God, Father, there is no need for that! I can meet my doom like a man, without leaning on another man, without seeking for strength from any human being—Father, you are a Dominican; what is your name?"

"I am Father Confessor to the Dominican Monastery of Marienthal. My name is Hyacinth Rotten bücher."

"Confessor?" said Biener, and he smiled faintly, "Then you have come to hear my last confession?"

"Why—to hear this fellow talk, one would suppose he knew all about it already!" said Neuhaus brutally.

"I do know that my enemies can only find their safety in my death—From the moment I entered this fortress I have felt that my fate was sealed; all that has since occurred has been but a miserable farce, a pretence."

"You are prepared to receive your sentence of death, then, my son?" said the monk, solemnly. Neuhaus was dumb.

"I am" said the Chancellor. He crossed his hands

reverently over his breast and after a little pause he continued, in a low voice.

"Death has now no terrors for me. All my hopes of aid from friends, justice from the Emperor, are over. I have been delivered into the hands of my enemies ruthlessly, utterly. I should never escape from these •bonds so long as I had life; ought I not to rejoice, then, that the signal is given for my release even by death? I am old, grey—prematurely so, it may be—but yet my life has been full of joy. I have drunk deep of the cup of happiness, my days have been rich in love; in sorrow, too, and in suffering. Why need I shrink from my doom? Father! I have lived too long to fear death. do not need to be taught how to die, and yet I am grateful to you for coming to me. It is long-longsince my eyes have beheld a kindly human countenance. It is usual to grant one last boon to the condemned. You will not refuse what I crave? Stay with me, Father; be my guest here till the end has come."

"I have no authority for granting any such favour as that," growled Neuhaus. Biener slightly raised his eyebrows; then, with a deprecating glance at the Dominican, he said,

"Let me at least, then, be supplied with writing materials. Every man would wish to leave his worldly affairs in order, to make his will before he is called away from this world."

"A felon can possess nothing. All his property is forfeited to the crown. No need for him to make wills!"

The Chancellor's brow contracted. The good monk could not contain his indignation.

"Captain," he cried, and his voice shook with passion, "It is not, of course, for me to dictate to you; but let me entreat that you will behave to his Excellency with that

respect which his rank, his character, demand! A man like the Chancellor—"

"Chancellor? I warrant we recognise no Chancellors here! This fellow is a traitor, convicted of high treason, condemned to death. I will look again at my instructions; but I guess pretty surely that he will appeal for—hangman's grace—in vain!"

"I beg that you will make no further effort on my behalf, Father. It would be a pity to urge this conscientious gentleman to overstep his duty in any respect. May I ask whether my request is contrary to custom and precedent, sir? Or is your objection made on special grounds?"

"A criminal, I tell you, can have no possessions. His estate is confiscated to the crown."

"And his family must become beggars? Is it not enough if his own blood is shed? Are the innocent doomed to suffer also? Oh! this is too hard—too bitter!"

Tears rushed to Biener's eyes. For a few minutes he gave way to an agony of grief for his dear ones that no thought of his own suffering could have awakened. As he lay on his wretched pallet, convulsed with sobs—the terrible sobs of a strong man—the monk gently laid his hand on his shoulder; bending over him he murmured in his ear.

"Man—think of Christ—Courage! This is the last drop in the bitter cup."

After a time Biener raised himself, "I am ready," he said calmly,—"Am I permitted to know what has been the fate of my good son, whose only crime is that he has tried to liberate his father?"

"Banishment for conspiring to release a prisoner."

"My blessing rest upon him! He may be happy yet;—when far away from this country—And that good soul who tried to help us?"

"He has been dismissed."

"And well for him too! Best for him that he should shoulder his oil cask, and trudge over the land till his limbs fail him; till he goes to his grave."

A soldier here came in and whispered in the captain's ear. "All right! Everything is prepared. Follow me that you may receive your sentence," said Neuhaus.

Biener tried hard to overcome the hatred and revulsion with which the sight of the man he now supposed about to pronounce his doom always inspired him. But no sooner had he entered the hall than he saw that the detested Hippoliti was not there. The Sheriff was a man once well-known to him—no other than his old friend, Kolb!

The Chancellor's eyes sparkled with joy as he beheld him once more.

"Can this be you indeed!" he cried.

The sheriff turned pale as death. He was forced to hold by the table for support, his lips trembled as he tried to articulate,

"I am indeed the most miserable wretch to whom this dreadful task has been given—My benefactor—my revered friend—can you forgive?" he murmured.

"Do not let yourself feel it thus," said Biener cheerfully, "Believe me, the sentence will sound far less dreadful pronounced by a friend. Only think what it would be to hear it from some malignant fellow who might gloat over it—and over my fate—You have been appointed sheriff at last, just as you had hoped. You have made your own way, independently. Doubtless you are a happy family man by this time—Ah yes! now I recollect, I heard of a wedding just lately—How little did I imagine then that it was yours!"

"I am happy, quite happy—At least, yesterday I might have said so—To-day how dark all seems!"

"But it must not be so!" said Biener heartily "you must try to look your duty in the face calmly."

Kolb wiped the beads of cold sweat from his brow. He made a great effort, and at last succeeded in regaining some composure. The Actuary had meantime handed him the protocol; he proceeded to read it with a faltering voice,

"We, Ferdinand Karl of Austria, reigning Count of the Tyrol, having received from our President of the Chamber, Doctor Johann Michael Schmaus, a full, true, and circumstantial report of the criminal proceedings just concluded against our former Privy Councillor and State Chancellor, Doctor Wilhelm Biener—"

Kolb suddenly broke into vehement weeping,

"I cannot read it!" he said, covering his face with his hands "A man like the Chancellor—Such a man to die such a death!"

"Must the prisoner comfort his Judge?" said Biener, "Surely, my friend, you ought to rejoice to think I am innocent? You cannot begrudge me the inestimable blessing of feeling myself guiltless?" When I was a little boy I remember getting as my first prize in rudimentis the life of Sir Thomas More, once Chancellor of England. When I read of that noble man, I thought that to die just such a death as his should be my best ambition, my most fervent aspiration. Ought I not now to rejoice that my life should end as his did?—Read on—"

"Whereas; The said Doctor Wilhelm Biener has failed to keep his oath of allegiance to his Sovereign and to shew that honour, interest and respect most due to Kings; inasmuch as that he has received treasonably and thanklessly those favours and dignities so largely bestowed by his gracious Sovereign; that he has, moreover, written and put forth many scandalous and

libellous lampoons, at sundry times, reflecting on the lives of his benefactors; but more especially injurious to the memory of our late beloved Duchess Claudia; that he has villified many of our most respected statesmen and advisers, temporal and spiritual, thereby outraging the dignity of our realm; Be it therefore proclaimed, before the face of all men, that the said Biener be beheaded by the handman's sword, as a warning to all malignants in expiation of his many crimes, and that all his goods and worldly tenements shall be forfeited to the crown as is most right and fitting.

"Given and signed by our hand, this tenth day of July, sixteen-hundred and fifty-one, Ferdinand Karl."

A long silence followed the reading of this frightful document.

Biener himself at length broke it. Advancing to the table he signed his name steadily; then he gave the paper back to the sheriff.

"I thank you," he said gently, "We will not say goodbye yet—we shall meet once more—at the dread hour—When is this sentence to be executed?"

"To-morrow morning at nine o'clock precisely," said Neuhaus roughly.

"It will find me prepared."

Biener bent his head to all present with a gentle dignity that was indescribably touching. Then he returned to his cell.

Not a trace of agitation now remained. For a time he paced up and down with folded arms. Presently, he stopped and read the lines written upon the wall this morning. He was about to add to them when, apparently changing his mind, he cast away the morsel of lead and went to the window. Long—long did he gaze down upon that lovely scene spread beneath his eyes. At length he turned away.

"This is not a time for writing—No! not even for enjoying so beautiful a sight as that," he said to himself, "Let me rather look within, question the past, demand of my conscience whether there may not be some dark spot, some deed I would have cancelled—recalled—"

A long interval of intense thought seemed to elapse; then he cried fervently, "My God-I thank Thee! The retrospect is not a dark one. I had scarcely dared to hope it would prove so bright. There is nothing I would hide, nothing to be ashamed of. I need not veil my face in the presence of my Creator. And what a happy life has been granted to me! I can see those: huge trees by the river beneath which we played as boys. My ambition first awoke there; my first prize was wonby its banks. My life has been like the course of that river, stealing under green trees in its infancy, then rippling by the sunny meadows in its boyhood, flowing with a more impetuous current when manhood came. Then I went to the Margrave. Then followed those years at the Bavarian Court, before I entered the serviceof the Emperor and of Duke Leopold his brother.-Yonder rock jutting out into the stream sends the river with a swifter impulse on its course; so did my life gain a new impetus when I came here. My young wife was then beside me: her sweet influence might have softened me, had she not so soon been torn from me, I might have been more genial, less sarcastic.—Afterwards what a proud career seemed open to me! I stood then on an eminence like that castle-"

He quitted the window abruptly, and began to pace the room greatly disturbed.

"Ah! Those hopes—those aspirations!—Claudia—noble, exalted, Claudia! I see thee as thou shon'st upon me, like some bright particular star in the zenith. The

star has set—clouds obscure it, the night comes when my bodily eyes can see it no more; yet its beams warm my heart still. My devotion has grown pure as is the pearl within its shell, I can lay it at the feet of the Eternal; for it is the jewel of great price that has enriched my life!" Again he went to the window and looked down on the course of the river. "See those masses of rock which have fallen into the water; they almost fill up the bed of the stream. So have all my ambitions perished. I die and leave no trace of my life behind me. No one will know that I have ever existed. Yet not so," he added after a little while, "all my life long, I have upheld truth and justice—an equal law, equal rights for all human beings of every rank and creed, nation and colour. Love, justice, toleration, have been my watchwords. must surely have sown a few seeds. Aye! and now I shall water them, with my blood!-That seed has not been sown in vain. After the lapse of centuries, perhaps the morning sun will fructify it. My life may not have been lived in vain. I have dedicated it to truth. Truth will be justified of her champion yet, and will justify him,"

After a time he went on, "But have I not been actuated by pride and vain-glory? Can'st thou, Biener, lay thy hand upon thy heart and affirm that thou hast not over-estimated thyself, been too contemptuous of thy fellow-men? Oh, I do confess it! My own weapon has recoiled upon myself, it has caused my death—Yet this hour should atone for much—Claudia! Art thou near me? Can'st thou see and know? The moment of our re-union is near—I am not unworthy to meet thee again——"

The day went on; the night—his last night on earth—sank down over hill and stream. Biener remained serene and cheerful. He fell peacefully into the arms of

sleep; in his dreams a happy waking was ever present to him; it sanctified his last slumber.

Early the following morning, a horseman was spurring his steed and gallopping towards Muhlau. He sang and whistled alternately, and seemed willing to give a share of his good spirits to any comrade he might meet. A man who was riding slowly along before him, looked back, every now and then, as if inviting his companionship and he had soon overtaken him. This person was wrapped in a large cloak, a thick black beard covered the lower part of his face and a broad-brimmed hat was drawn down over his brows to shade him from the sun. Already, the first freshness of the July morning was over, and the air was palpitating with heat.

"Good morrow, friend," said the black cavalier, reining in his big horse, "let thy chestnut draw his breath a minute, Art riding a race, this hot morning?"

"True for you sir! that is just what I am doing—Riding for Rattenburg, with an express from his Highness."

"Aye indeed? Are you so. Let thy poor beast cool his flanks, he'll go all the better for it afterwards. It is going to be infernally hot to-day."

"He's sound, wind and limb, and he's used to the road, and I'm sure he's no hotter than I am myself. My shirt's sticking to my back, my tongue's cleaving to the roof of my mouth. The great folks don't inquire how we contrive to carry their orders for them!"

"Aye, aye! 'Tis no good expecting to eat cherries when once thou hast thy orders. And yet I dare swear ten times for one, they'd as soon thou would'st take thy time over the business as not!"

Franz drew bridle, and took a good look at his companion.

"Oh ho! my friend, Do you mean to hint that, as likely as not, my dispatch won't do anybody any good?"

"Likely? I should say so," laughed the man, "I'm a tradesman from Bavaria. I don't know much about your public matters here in the Tyrol, yet one thing I know. That Fortress of Rattenberg is just chock full of prisoners of one sort and another, and it's not very likely that that express will do any of them much good."

"Maybe you're right sir, this dispatch here lies heavy enough on my heart, it seems to burn it. Look here, the paper's as wet as I am. The seals are all melted away, I could open it, and nobody a bit the wiser for it neither." As he spoke, Franz took a dispatch out of his bosom and held it out towards the horseman.

"Well, do so then, and make an end of thy doubts," said he carelessly. Franz laughed and gathered up his reins—his horse had shied at something—"If I was as clever as you, sir," he said, "I shouldn't be shaking my bones as a courier."

"Well, let me see it then. I'll read it and tell you what is in it."

Franz was half fearful, half curious. He weakly gave the packet to his companion, who opened it, read it, and returned it to him again in silence.

"Well? Why don't you speak? What's it all about?"

"No good. I wouldn't be the bearer of that letter, for a good deal."

"But read it to me, sir, I beseech you to read it-"

"Well then, it is neither more nor less than an order that Chancellor Biener, who, it seems, is lying a prisoner at Rattenberg just now, is to have his head chopped off the very minute you get to the fortress and deliver it."

Franz shuddered and grew white to the very lips

He had to grasp the pommel of his saddle, to keep from falling off his horse—he cried, half distractedly,

"Jesu Maria! And is that the news I'm taking to

Rattenberg then?"

"I can believe you feel it," said the man kindly "Truly it is a bad business."

"And must I really carry them this bloody order?" groaned the poor young fellow "The Chancellor, too—the man I owe everything I have in the world to!—Am I to thank him by carrying him his death warrant? No, that I will not do—I will go back! They may send somebody else on their wicked errands!"

"You know best, whether you can go back or not," said the man, and he shrugged his shoulders, "Can you

disobey royal commands?"

"Oh, you're right, I daren't do it! I didn't think of what I was saying—I only know that I'm a most miserable wretch! Well! at least I need be in no hurry to deliver this thing—I wish my horse was a snail—Aye, that I do! and that it would take us a life time to get there."

By this time they were passing the first houses of Muhlau, "My horse has cast a shoe. Just ride on quietly and get a draught of wine for thyself at the inn while I go in search of a blacksmith. Wait at the inn for me, and we can ride on quietly together, afterwards."

The black horseman vanished down a narrow lane as he spoke, and Franz slowly rode up to Tapster Sauerwein's hostelry, formerly so well known to him. Only for the stranger's injunctions, he would scarcely have found courage to stop there. For years past, he had not entered the house. Since that day when Lisa had thrown him over he had not heart to call—and there was Lisa herself, sitting on the stairs.

The poor thing, supposing herself safe from the publi

gaze at this early hour, had stolen out to get a little fresh air. She looked thin and pale, broken-hearted, almost despairing; and yet her beauty was not gone, indeed she was even lovelier now, wasted, fragile, as she looked, than in those old days when the young fellow had found it so hard to give her up.

She looked up, recognised who it was, and springing to her feet, she fled into the house with a low terrified cry.

"Lisa! Stay Lisa! I won't grieve thee, I only want a drop of wine, then I'm going," he cried; but she was gone, and Sauerwein himself stood before him, looking much distressed.

Meanwhile the black horseman, after making a feint of finding a smithy, had stationed himself in the shadow of a wall, from whence he commanded a view of the inn door. His keen eyes gleamed with satisfaction, when he saw that Franz had followed his advice and was going into the house. "Fate has done more for us than I have done myself," he muttered, "He is safe to sit there for an hour to come." He took his horse by the bridle and led him along under the shadow of a wall till he was well out of the village; then springing hastily into the saddle, he took the road to Rattenberg at a hand gallop. The smith rubbed his eyes and stared after him, in some bewilderment.

"A queer priest, yon!" he said, "I don't know, my eyes may deceive me, yet I think I saw a red moustache under that black beard of his!"

The tapster had set a bottle of wine before his guest, and was asking kindly after his well being.

"I can't complain much, cousin, but where is Lisa gone? Why doesn't she bring the wine in as usual?" said Franz.

"Franz, my lad, that's an awkward question-Dost

thou not know what grief poor Lisa has given us all?' Don't trouble thyself about her."

- "But she's here still in thy house, cousin?"
- "I'm not a heathen, Franz! How could I turn the poorthing from my doors to go from bad to worse, perhaps? Why she might have laid violent hands on herself, whoknows? The poor soul won't have much longer to suffer, now, either."
 - "How dost thou mean?" faltered the young man.
- "Did'st thou look at her? She has death written in her face."
 - "That Italian villain deserted her then?"
- "Since the time when the poor thing let him lead her astray, the scoundrel has never once come near her. I went myself to 'Spruck and told the fellow what was his duty by her, what any honest man would do. He threatened to hound me out of the town with blood hounds! Lisa would have taken to the roads and begged her bread—"
- "But surely they could have forced him to provide for her?"
- "When the Duke's Chamberlain is in question, what chance has any plain man, I should like to know, of getting a hearing? Besides, we didn't want our trouble proclaimed by the bellman, neither. Many's the time I've pondered it over; but there seemed no hope for her. Lisa cried herself nearly dead, and, when her time came she just went away and couldn't be found anywhere;—that was the worst time of all, poor worm!"
 - "Where is she?"
 - "Most likely lying on her bed, crying."
 - "I will go and see her."
- "Then I think thou wilt drive her fairly distracted. Why, my boy, thou, of all people, hast no need to trouble thy head about her."

Some one rode up to the door just then, whom the tapster hastened to welcome. "God greet your reverence!" he said "You won't pass our door without coming in?"

"I have little time, I am needed at the Scheiner Alp with all speed, the Sennerin is dying," answered the horseman, taking off his broad leafed hat and wiping his brow.

"Well, your reverence will wet your lips at any rate," said Sauerwein. The priest at last allowed himself to be persuaded to come in. He tied his beast to the ring in the wall and sat down at [a table, while mine host bustled about to get him some refreshment.

Franz seized the chance this gave him; and, following the dictates of his good heart, made straight for the little room where he had had his last sad interview with Lisa long years ago.

She was there, she had flung herself on her little bed which stood in a corner of the room. Her whole body was convulsed with sobs; her pillow wet with her tears. Above her bed hung a wreath of field flowers, withered and brown now, such as is generally placed on the coffin of a dead child. She raised herself, when the door opened; but buried her face quickly again when she saw who had come in.

"Franz! don't come near me!" she sobbed "for the love of Christ, do not come here—"

"But why, dear?" he said gently, and he came close to her and laid his hand tenderly, reverently, on her shoulder," Lisa! it's a long long time since I saw thee. I have to go again immediately; let me say just once "God bless thee—just once, Lisa dear."

"Oh! thou good, good man!" she cried, and she raised her head a little, "Then thou dost not despise me utterly?"

"Despise thee? I despise thee? Poor thing, thou hast been only too sorely punished! Lisa, can'st thou not see how it breaks my heart to see thee thus?"

"Then thou hast forgiven me, Franz?" she whispered.

"I have nothing to forgive—I can't be angry with thee, thou art still too dear to me for that."

"Oh, thou true, true heart!" she sobbed, "How bitterly I am punished, that I should ever have scorned thee! What might I have been—What am I now?"

"Don't fret about what can't be helped, Lisa dear. Only try and get strong and well again, and all will be well with us yet; thou'lt see it will!"

She looked at him with unutterable misery in her eyes. Then a wan, faint smile stole over her thin face.

"Well with me?" she whispered, "Aye, let us hope so! But Franz, dear, it won't be in this world, not here. I have to grow weaker yet—and I'm of no use to any one. It will be best for all when I am released from this sad place—when it is rid of me. Franz, my heart is beating up into my throat so, I cannot say what I want to say to thee; I do bless thee, Franz! How good it was of thee to come and see me once again!"

"I must go now, Lisa; but I'll come soon to see thee again."

"No, thou must not come any more, dear," she said as she sank back again, "It would only make both our hearts the heavier—but—when thou hearest—that I am dead—Franz, wilt thou follow my body to the grave?"

She turned her face to the wall and held out her thin hand to him; he pressed it, and rushed out of the room. His eyes were full of tears, the sunshine dazzled him. He went up to the table where the priest was sitting, filled a glass and emptied it hurriedly, then held it out again.

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"Thou art not in such great haste then—Where art bound for, Franz?" asked mine host.

"For Rattenburg. The despatch will get there soon enough for all the good it will do," he said

gloomily.

"So—so—For Rattenburg?" asked the priest. (Sauerwein had gone to fetch up some more wine.) "Thou dost well to tarry here then, my friend," he went on, "A sorry sight wilt thou see there, this morning. Aye! It proves what a man may come to, even the greatest of us." Seeing that Franz looked curiously at him, he went on,—"Only a few years ago Chancellor Biener was the first subject of this realm. To think that this very morning he is to be beheaded for the crime of high treason!"

Franz sprang to his feet like a man suddenly awakened, he gathered sense enough to say, "Surely your reverence is misinformed about that? I ought to know about that matter better than anybody else!"

"No offence friend—I have it from the executioner's wife. The Captain came down and told him himself, the hour he was to go up and what it was for; but he charged him to tell no one—to say, if any body asked his errand, that he was going up to bury a suicide; but the man told his wife, and so I came to know of it."

"Well, it may be—but how can it either, when I am the bearer of the order—I have it here!"

"Really? Well, it may be so-"

"Look, your reverence, look for yourself. Here's the packet—the heat has melted the wax—",

The priest ran his eye over the paper, he turned ghastly white; then he cried—"You say this is an order for the execution—Who told you so? For Christ's sake, speak!"

"Who? Why, a man I met riding along just now—

The seal was gone, so he read it—That was why I didn't want to get there—"

"Wretched man! This is not his death warrant—it is the Chancellor's pardon."

"Oh, my God!" cried the poor fellow, staggering as if he had received a blow on the head, "My horse! for the love of Christ—for all the saints—my horse! This will be my death!" He rushed down, flung himself into the saddle and plunged his spurs into the sides of the spirited creature. It reared, plunged; then they disappeared at a stretching gallop along the dusty road.

"Most wonderful! Most horrible, if it can be true!" said the priest, looking after them, "A dreadful suspicion seizes me. May God give speed and a sure foot to the brave horse!"

The sun was already high in the heavens when the Chancellor was roused from refreshing sleep by a sound of knocking and hammering. He went to the window, and then saw, too plainly, what the noise portended. They were erecting a scaffold.

He dressed himself with unwonted care, wearing his richly laced collar and cuffs over his dark doublet; then, throwing his large furred mantle round him, he drew a little black cap over his white head and then he put on his plumed hat. He was only just dressed when Father Hyacinth came to accompany him to the courtyard. Biener needed no support, he even sought to comfort the good monk, who seemed quite overwhelmed by the horror of what he was about to witness.

He sat down on the hard pallet, while Biener knelt near him and made his last confession. When it was done, the monk asked solemnly,

"And is this all, my son? Is there nothing more?"
"Nothing."

"In the dread presence of death you still maintain that you are innocent?"

"Yes. I know myself to be guiltless of all that I am accused of, and I hope for mercy from my Creator."

"My son, it will be granted you; this strength and fortitude must come to you from above. But has all hope of mercy here below forsaken you? His Highness may relent; he has been misled. Would it not be well to sue for mercy? To appeal to him?"

"For pardon? That infers that I am not innocent! As surely as that a just God reigns on high, so surely can I say—'I am innocent.' I wanted justice only, since that is denied me, I will sue for no favour—What is that signal?" he added, as the clear tone of a bell was heard.

"High mass is about to be celebrated, let us go to the

Chapel."

"Yes. I have tried to live like a Christian, let me try to die like one."

When he had reached the door, he turned again and gazed at every object that the little room contained.

"What strange beings we are!" he said, "Even a prison becomes dear and familiar to us in time. We

may get reconciled to anything!"

A few persons were collected in the middle aisle of the Chapel. Kolb knelt there, his face buried in his hands. A devotional chair was placed in the Choir for Biener; he knelt upon it devoutly, and the Communion Service was celebrated—the elements were given by Father Hyacinth with a shaking hand.

When Mass was over, the Chancellor rose and proceeded to look at the architecture of the building. It was decorated in the fine old German manner, and possessed some paintings of merit representing the life of its patron, Saint Ursula. These Biener looked at with

a pleased eye, then he went up to Kolb and laying his hand on his shoulder, said softly,

"My friend! I am loth to break in upon your devotions, yet I would ask you to let me explain something to you, which has long been on my mind. When we parted you questioned my judgment—"

"In an hour like this, how can you remember so trifling a matter as that!" broke in Kolb.

"According to my conception of the law, I was right in deciding as I did. A peasant finds a valuable oil pit in the land he holds under the Convent of Stams. He claims it; but legally the Convent, as lord of the soil, has a right to all minerals found under its surface. At first the poor fellow's petition is granted, the Convent told that they must make his claim good to him; this was illegal, what the man claimed was a form only. I might have decided for the form, but, believe me, forms are dead, the spirit only lives. A day will yet come when mere legal fictions will be extinct; when truth, and justice, will prevail; justice expressed in plain words. Centuries may have to elapse first, but, believe me, the vital spirit will yet emerge, the encumbering garments will drop away. It is the letter of the law which 'kills."

A roll of the drum broke upon their ears, Neuhaus entered, a drawn sword in his hand.

"The hour has tolled, time's up," he said roughly.

"Courage—courage, my son! Be brave in Christ—It is hard to bear—" murmured the monk.

Biener gave him his hand, "Does it tremble?" he said. "What day is this?"

"The day of Saint Alexis."

"Yes? I once had a valued friend of that name Excellent Malaspina! thou hast had much influence over my fate—Little did'st thou think that on this, thy

natal day, I should go on my long journey! It should be an auspicious day."

They emerged out of the gloom of the chapel into the full blaze of the July sun. The blue vault above their heads was cloudless. From the steps leading down into the courtyard, they could see the whole of the lovely valley spread beneath them like a map, with its smiling villages, its castles perched aloft on the hill sides, its church spires, and its shining river flowing on between green banks.

Biener stood still for a minute or too, and gazed down on the peaceful scene. He drew a deep draught of the sweet summer air.

"How pure, how fresh it is! How long it is since I have breathed it!" he said.

He scarcely noticed the scaffold, with its frightful black trappings. A seat was placed by the block, and as was customary, the Sherriff, the Actuary, and the Judge all stood beside it. A company of soldiers was stationed round the courtyard, Neuhaus, who was in command of them, on horseback.

As Biener came down the steps he bade a cheerful "good day" to every one. The good monk remained close by his side. When the sentence was read again the Chancellor uncovered his head to listen. Once he raised his eyes beseechingly to heaven. The sherriff took the ominous black rods, broke them, and cast the fragments, with a trembling hand, at the prisoner's feet, while a silence, as awful as that of the tomb, prevailed. A shade of pallor overspread Biener's countenance, but he placed his foot resolutely upon the broken rods. Then, in a full resounding voice he said, "I yield up my life in obedience to the will of my sovereign. He is guiltless of my blood. He has been deceived, misled. With this, my dying breath,

I call upon all here present to bear witness that I have been falsely accused, illegally tried, unjustly sentenced. I have been treated as the vilest criminal; cruelly, inhumanly, separated from my family. I declare myself innocent. With my last breath I would say that I am utterly innocent of every crime laid to my charge by my enemies."

"Silence!" thundered Neuhaus, "Is this a time for useless assertions? You are not permitted to resist your sentence!"

"I resist it not, but this protest I must make. It is right and fitting that the people of the Tyrol, that the whole world, should know the truth—Now, Father, the bitter words come," he added turning to the monk, "Greet my dear ones—my wife—my children—greet them lovingly for me. Poor Elizabeth! How art thou to survive the horror of this day—God keep thee from despair!"

For a moment the strong man shook like a leaf—but he fought down his emotion by a manful effort.

"Tell them" he went on, "to have no thought of avenging my blood. They must think of me as I think of them, lovingly only. Take my sword to my son. This breviary keep yourself, Father—The soldiers who bury me must have my clothes——Now—comes the end! Father, give me your hand, promise me one thing more. Go to the Duke. Tell him of the manner of my death. Tell him that I was innocent, yet I did not sue for that which I might have claimed as a right. His mother, foreseeing the worst, gave me a sealed letter on her death-bed addressed to him. That letter would have saved my life. My enemies have destroyed it. No proof remains of what I tell you, yet—when I am dead he may believe it; he may think more justly of me—I thank you Father! Farewell—What am I to do?" he asked of a man who

had approached him at a sign from Neuhaus, "If it might be granted me I would crave that the executioner's hand might not touch me."

"I am only a workman from the town, Sir, I only wished to do you the little service of removing your lace collar—"

"Must it be so? Is my neck not enough exposed?"

He let his furred mantle fall to the ground, then he removed the laced collar from about his throat. Clasping the crucifix in both his hands he knelt before the block—he laid his head upon it. The man bound a silk handkerchief over his eyes; then he stepped down quietly.

"Now, O God! lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace," cried the Chancellor in a loud voice—The executioner rushed from his concealment. Swift as a flash of lightning gleamed the sharp sword in the sunshine—Biener's head rolled down from the block—and—with it the fingers of his right hand—As the sword fell he had raised it, it had been shorn with the stroke.

An awful silence then fell on them broken only at intervals by the deep thud of the muffled drum.

At length Father Hyacinth was able to utter a few words of prayer interrupted by Kolb's agonised sobs.

"Almighty God! Most merciful Father! Thou who searchest the hearts of Thy children, judge this Thy servant who has just departed this life, in Thy tender mercy. Take his soul to Thine eternal rest. Oh! may he have now entered into the Kingdom of Thy love!

—Amen!"

The men tore away the black cloth covering the scaffold and wrapped the body in it. As they did so Neuhaus stood by. He gazed long, with a look of hatred horrible to witness, on the face of the dead. Then he glanced up at a window of the fortress. A

face was visible at it, a face resembling that of the black horseman of Muhlau. Once more Neuhaus turned his eyes on that dead form, so calm, so serene in its last sleep. For the first time in his life a nervous terror seized him. He shrank away shuddering and called to the men to remove the remains with all the speed possible.

As poor Kolb tried to leave the spot he staggered and almost fell. The good Monk supported him.

Suddenly, repeated, violent blows were heard resounding on the outer gate; a voice cried "Open, open for the love of Christ!"

"What can be the meaning of this?" said Father Hyacinth. Neuhaus sent a soldier to unbar the gate. It opened and a young peasant lad rushed in, his face streaming, panting with the speed with which he had run.

"An express from his Highness for the Captain!" he gasped, and he thrust a packet into the hands of Neuhaus,

"Why, how hast come by this?" cried the Captain.

As well as he could speak for want of breath the boy tried to tell his story. "I saw a fellow scouring along from Brixlegg—as if he had all the fiends in Hell after him—I was hewing down a fir tree yonder—when he came by me—the poor beast was dead beat—I saw that—he couldn't go a step more but still he spurred him, so, just on the crest of the Zimmerman rock, down he came on his head with a crash—The man under him—he struck his forehead on a sharp stone—the blood gushed from his nose and mouth—Poor chap! You're not long for this world, thinks I, and down I ran. Poor fellow—he could only reach me this—He managed to say I must run, run and give it to the Captain, here—for it was a matter of life and death."

Neuhaus coolly unfolded the packet. Then with a shrug of his shoulders he said,

"It had pleased his Highness to commute Biener's sentence to banishment for life. 'Tis a pity it comes too late. The execution is just over. The messenger must have stopped on the road. It is clearly his fault."

That night a plain deal coffin on a rude bier was standing beneath the arched roof of the side aisle in the fine Church of Saint Virgilius at Rattenburg. The light of the never dying lamp before the shrine scarcely reached the spot. Huge shadows flitted over the flags and flickered, ghastly and weird, on walls and pillars. The church door was open but all without was black, for the moon had not yet risen.

Some men who had set a dark lantern on the ground were digging by the castle rock outside. They were digging a grave. It was easy for two men to steal into the church unobserved amidst these glimmering lights and fantastic shadows. By the faint ray of light that fell on them Dr. Wardtell and poor old Schildhofer might have been seen, creeping along the side aisle.

They, with other friends, had been waiting to welcome the Chancellor as soon as he should be freed from his prison house, to see him safely over the frontiers, and restored to his family once more.

Instead of this, they were met by the news of his execution.

The poor men begged to have at least the body of their friend given to them.

Neuhaus brutally replied that they were not even to see the remains. The malignity which had hunted him to death was not to end even with his life.

"There's nobody but the gravediggers out yonder," whispered the old peasant.

Wardtell came forward—He raised the coffin-lid—Then he reeled back—he bent his head and wept aloud. It was indeed a piteous thing to see that head grown grey with long suffering—that terrible red mark—The poor old man murmured, "My best—my dearest friend. Oh! Amicissimus! that I should have lived to see this—Thou, so noble, so great! Thou hast indeed been suddenly taken—as thou once said—!"

"He might have known it!" said the old peasant, the big tears running down his furrowed cheeks into his white beard, "Well Doctor, let us try to think of some comfort. The very last time I saw him he said to me "I am seeking a City of Refuge! He has most surely found it now!"

Dr. Wardtell stooped down and kissed the stiff, clay-cold lips, "Fare-thee-well!" he said, "Did we not know that a better life follows this, thy fate would make us doubt the providence of God. There—there,—under those celestial palm trees, we may one day meet to part no more."

They carefully, reverently, replaced the coffin-lid. A sound of rude laughter floated in on the night air. The soldiers, who had divided his garments among them were making merry at a tavern hard by.

"Listen! let's be quick and get done, and get a share of the fun!" one of the gravediggers was heard to say.

The two mourners escaped unseen in the darkness of the night.

"Commit thy way unto Him, Thy grief His love will bear, Thy Heavenly Father loves thee, He dries the mourner's tear."

These old familiar words, the viola bearing them company, rose from beneath the window of the turret

room at the Büchsenhaus where Elizabeth waited breathlessly for every sound. Her boy was by her side, he listened with delight as old Schwarz played and sang.

Elizabeth looked happier than she had done for months past. A smile lit up her thin, wan face, and, dark as it was, she could not quit the window, for had not Doctor Wardtell gone to guide her husband across the frontiers? Was he not to come and take her to join him? Yes! They had sworn to do it! Oh! the rapture of that re-union!

"Little mother, give me a shining bit of money for the poor old man. Little mother, I like his song, I'll get him to teach it me—I'll learn it to sing to father when he comes back to us again. It is a long, long time since father left us, mother, but Benedict doesn't forget him one bit. Isn't he coming back to us mother?"

"Little one, thou can'st not understand it. Father won't come to us here, but we will go to him, a long way off, in a strange land, where he is waiting for us."

"A strange land?" cried the little fellow, full of eagerness, "Thou must tell me all about it, mother, as soon as ever I have given the money to the poor old man. Are we going soon? Is it a nice country?"

"Yes! Quite soon, my boy, this very night perhaps. I am counting the minutes till we go—but run away, do not keep poor old Schwarz waiting any longer. Let him get into shelter before the storm breaks."

"I'm going, Mammy," He stood a moment and looked up into her face, "Thou wilt never cry again if we are going to father? We need never cry when we are with him! That's a pretty song, though 'Commit thy ways unto Him' and Benedict knows what that means, he knows quite well. It means our dear Father in Heaven. He will show us where we are to find father!"

He ran away, and his mother fell on her knees, raising her hands to heaven. Suddenly a vivid flash of

lightning lighted up all the inky sky without.

"Oh God I will try! My child has said it, I will commit all into Thy hands. Thou wilt lead me, Thy hand is stretched out in mercy to us, Thou hast softened the Duke's heart. Oh! my faith was going—soon I could not have believed any longer—"

The door of the room flew open. As she started up from her knees Rosine rushed to her. "The bailiffs are here!" cried the girl.

"To-night? Go then, admit them. There is no one here to keep them out."

As the girl was going to obey, men were seen advancing along the corridor bearing torches in their hands. They had waited for no permission to enter.

Elizabeth turned faint with terror when she saw that Hippoliti was with them. He came up to her smiling, he said

"Pardon me, dear lady, if I once more intrude this detested face of mine upon you. Nothing short of imperative necessity would have made me do so."

"It is night, we are alone here. Take off that smooth mask, and say what it is that you seek," she said rather

breathlessly.

"Cruel as ever! Well—if you decline to listen to me as a friend, as Fiscal I am forced to speak. You must give the keys of this house into my keeping and all its contents; it has been forfeited to the crown."

"Why so? Is it not our own?"

"The cost of the criminal proceedings, the fine imposed on you will probably exceed the value of all that you possess."

"Generous! Magnanimous!—Yes I begin to know how much a royal pardon is worth—We preserve but

our bare lives then? We go into banishment penniless? May I not even take away my clothes? There have been no criminal proceedings instituted against me, I presume?"

"Certainly not; but the case is urgent, there is no time to separate things now. You can take away nothing at present. Your private property will be sent to you afterwards. Permit me," he said, and he snatched the bunch of keys hanging by her side and tossed them rudely to the notary beside him, "You may begin the inventory at once. Frau Biener must understand that she cannot be permitted to remain any longer in a royal castle which has now reverted to the crown by forfeiture."

When her keys were so roughly seized she shrank away trembling so that she could hardly support herself and murmuring,

"My head—Oh my head! How it swims."

The little boy ran to her crying, "What is it? What is it, little mother? What are these bad men going to do to us?"

"Hush dear—No evil will befall us, we are going to father! Gentlemen, if I am to be cast out like some dishonest serving wench I will go at once—I am quite ready—You think to humiliate me; but you are welcome to all. Take away the shelter of our roof from us, rob us of everything. This child and I can go—Yes! We laugh at your malignity! We are rich—rich!—richer than I have been for months! By daybreak you will no longer be encumbered with our presence."

"I don't understand. I am sorry to say I cannot grant you even such a favour as shelter for the night. You must go at once."

"You cannot grant us a night's shelter!" she cried and her eyes flashed wildly, "you are obliged to turn the

child too out into the storm and darkness? Come then, my boy! let us go—We do not fear the storm or the darkness, thy mother will protect thee, she will take thee safe to father."

She was hurrying from the room, the frightened child clinging to her dress, when Wardtell and old Schildhofer hurriedly came in.

"Oh, good Doctor! We just needed you so sorely!" she cried "Schildhofer—thy good honest hand led me into this house, it shall lead me away from it too."

"Lead you out? How do you mean—Do they dare todrive you away nolens volens? Mr. Fiscal, such cannot possibly be the orders of his Highness?"

"Precisely so—his Highness's orders, they must becarried out too without a moment's delay," said the wretch with a diabolical grin.

"But it is inhuman! I repeat it, I do not believe his Highness is aware of it; I will see him myself—I will take all the responsibility; there *must* be some delay granted!"

"It is meant to humiliate me—but I will do as they demand of me. I will go to my husband this moment. It is only as bad as if we had been plundered, as if a fire had destroyed all our goods. Our lives have been spared to us. We are free."

"Our lives? Then you don't know—" said poor Wardtell, and he turned ashy pale, the next moment he could have bitten out his tongue for the word he had let fall, for her overwrought senses caught at it.

"What is it that I do not know?" she cried breathlessly, her eyes upon his tell-tale face, "Is there something that you are concealing from me?"

"We will go, forget that word of mine. You will know everything soon."

"I see it in your face—something frightful has happened

—Doctor, this suspense will kill me, what did you mean by *lives*, you said it so strangely—is Wilhelm—is my husband—"

"Oh my dear, try to bear up! For God's sake try!" cried the poor old Doctor, his lips twitching convulsively, "This child—is an orphan—you are—a widow."

She tried to scream, but fell back rigid, motionless, her arms flung wildly above her head, her eyes fixed and sightless. Then a fit of trembling seized her, she shook as if in an ague, but still no sound could her lips utter. At last she whispered,

"Doctor—Friend—Don't say that. He would not have told me a lie—well! he said with his own lips that he was innocent, 'as sure as that there is a God in Heaven,' were his words, 'they dare not touch one hair of my head!' If that was true—that you say—I would have to doubt—doubt—aye! I must doubt if there is a God in Heaven for there would be no justice—no God! Doctor—think what is hanging on it—Say it is false—say so!"

Her bosom heaved, she shook like an aspen, she pressed her two hands to her throbbing head as if to stop its dreadful pain.

"It is true, I must say it—I saw his dead body with these eyes," sobbed poor Wardtell.

"It is too true indeed," added Schildhofer.

She broke out into a shrill scream,

"His dead body!—oh God! Have they dared to lay their wicked, wicked, hands on his dear—Oh vile, vile, murderers. My honoured, sinless one! Oh my God, my God! Was that the gleaming sword I saw that night? Was that the sharp sword that clove me in twain!"

Poor little Benedict, though he could not understand what it all meant, cried bitterly,

"Father! Father! Where art thou Father? Don't forsake us! Don't leave us here!"

"Hush—They say he cannot hear us, boy—It is a lie—a lie. Is a prince's word, his pardon, useless?"

"No-It is no lie—the pardon was no lie—it came too late. His head had fallen."

"Fallen?—his head—his noble, kingly head? Oh then it is all empty—empty! He made it rich; he is dead—dead—cruelly murdered—He left me in full health—he is murdered—Say no—no, it cannot be!"

At that moment the storm, long gathering, burst over their heads in all its fury. A blinding flash of lightning was followed instantaneously by a crash that seemed as if it must crush the walls around them. They all shuddered with horror. Poor Elizabeth seemed all at once to become frenzied. "Ha! Thou art thundering up there in Thy black sky!" she yelled, "How dost thou dare to thunder? It is an empty sound—Thou art no just God—no true God—Thou hast helped the guilty, killed the innocent!"

Her blasphemous words seemed to be answered. Still more awful peals of thunder, more appalling flashes, blinding, terrifying, followed each other so fast that they had scarcely time to cross themselves between them.

"Come, my poor soul!" said Schildhofer compassionately, "thou must not blaspheme. We are all in God's hand."

"Indeed this is no time for heroics," said Hippoliti.

"Time—time? Aye and time to curse you!" she screamed, "Aye! thunder as you will—I will curse you!"

A majestic roll, like the discharge of a park of artillery, seemed almost to reply to her, "If it be true that Thou art sitting there above the clouds, hear me! Send down Thy fire, fling Thy bolts on them—on all the wicked

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men who have killed the noblest—the best—Take their senses! Let them and all their race be destroyed—Let shame, shame, be their portion so long as they shall live. Hear me, Thou whom I blaspheme!—Let them die, as they have made him die. Let them drop before the leaves fall. Let them appear before Thy judgment seat.—I summon them to meet us there!"

She fell on her knees; the child terrified clung about her neck, "Mother! what ails thee?" he cried, "get up, oh! get up—do not leave thy little boy—What has Benedict done? He has nobody but thee—"

The child's voice recalled her to her senses for a moment. She struggled to her feet, looked round her

vaguely, then tried to walk a step or two.

"We must go forth. We must go—go—No one shall stop us—Did you not hear him call me? I hear Wilhelm's voice in the thunder. Hark! there it is again! There! There! I can see him up there in the sky—Yes! Yes! I am coming, I will follow thee my beloved——"

"God Almighty help her!" said Schildhofer, "for her poor wits have utterly forsaken her!"

"She is mad—quite mad!" said Wardtell and he followed her with all speed.

She rushed down the stairs heedless of the poor child whose hand old Schildhofer had seized. As she reached the gate Dr. Wardtell overtook her. In vain he tried to hold her, she seemed possessed of superhuman strength, she almost flew from them. The child, stunned by all that was happening, clung to old Schildhofer.

A furious gust of wind met her, rain dashed against her, she heeded it not. Her eyes were gleaming wildly; she rushed out into the black night, still raving madly as she flew along.

She saw nothing but the vision her poor heated

brain had called up before her eyes. She saw Biener floating above her head, beckoning to her to follow him.

One prolonged, dazzling glare of lightning lit up everything around for a minute.

"Look! See! I told you he wasn't dead," she cried, "There he is—standing by the garden gate—there! Don't hold me! I must go to him, he is calling me!"

"Dear lady, try to recollect yourself!" said Wardtell seizing her by one arm while he signed to Schildhofer to take her by the other, "We don't want to keep you away from him, but you must shelter your child from this most awful storm."

"You shall not hold me! Wilhelm I am coming—coming!" she cried.

With the strength of delirium she wrenched herself free from their detaining grasp and fled into the darkness and raging storm. In a moment the night seemed to swallow her up; she was lost to them.

"See to the child, I will try to find her," said Wardtell. He set forth accompanied by some of the men, while Schildhofer took the poor trembling little lad into his arms and clasped him to his breast tenderly.

"Poor boy! I will never let thee want for anything. Some day thou shalt know how much I loved thy father," he said. Then he made his way down into the town as best he could, carrying the child.

The people scattered in different directions hoping to find their mistress. Soon the Büchsenhaus was dark and deserted save where one lighted window shewed where malice and rapine held their vigil in the midst of all the destruction they had brought about.

All trace of the fugitive seemed to be lost. She rushed on blindly, her hair streaming in the fierce wind which tore the garments from her cold limbs, the pelting rain drenching her poor body. Frenzy had seized her. One image alone was before her eyes. Her husband's form fled before her; as in some frightful dream she seemed ever about to grasp it when again it eluded her. She flew past the scattered houses of Hötting; she sped on, up through the pine woods to the top of the hill. The fury of the storm was spent at last, but now her tender limbs refused to bear her. Her teeth were chattering with fits of alternate fever and cold, she could fight against the storm no longer, she was forced to stop. She would have sunk to the ground, but she saw a ray of light streaming through the tree stems, and instinctively she followed it. Holding by the branches, at length she staggered in at the door of a rude little mountain Chapel, and there sank down, utterly exhausted. The red glare of a miner's lamp might have shewn her, had she retained consciousness, that she was not alone. When the storm broke, old Schwarz, used to rough lodging, had made his way to this accustomed spot. lighted his lamp, partly to guide any helpless creature who might be overtaken in the woods by the storm, to shelter; but also as a safeguard against the lightning. He heard some one come in and cried,

"Who art thou? Speak!" after a time getting no reply he added, "Art thou ill?" At last he could hear a low inarticulate wailing sound, "What ails thee? Whence comest thou? Where art thou going?"

"To him," she muttered. Then she raised herself a little, and tried to push back the heavy wet hair that clung about her face,

"Can'st thou say—where I may—find—him? I saw him—oh! I saw him—I lost him—Help me! help me! The fiends won't let me—find him—The devils are lords now in Heaven—Oh! it is sad!—so endlessly sad!—There is no God now—"

"Blaspheme not, miserable wretch!" cried the old

man, "What can'st thou have done? What can'st thou have suffered? There is a God—hold fast to thy belief in Him, and no fiend can harm thee—"

She laughed wildly, horribly, "God? How can there be a God? I prayed till my knees were sore—I wept my eyes out—If there had been a God would he not have pitied me? No! there is no God—The devils are lords—are lords—ah! here they come! they come! they are clutching me—Wilhelm! Wilhelm!" she shricked, "Help me—help me! they are tearing me away from thee—where art thou?"

"Most horrible!" murmured the blind man, "Oh! Lord, how strangely, how awfully dost Thou try the creatures that Thou has made! Let us try to commit our ways unto Thee—"

He sang the old hymn through, with a trembling voice, thinking to soothe this poor distracted creature.

"So thou can'st sing that old tune?" cried she "I used to know it too—such a long, long, time ago—my little boy liked it—Aye! he likes it—Hush! my little Benedict—don't cry—mother will smooth thy pillow for thee—Ah! how wet I am—How am I to keep thee warm, my poor little worm? There's nothing dry—nothing!"

"Say, for God's sake, who thou art?" cried the old man,
"Who am I? I'll tell thee—mind thou let nobody
know though. There's an old song—

"I come, I know not whence, I go, so far from hence,"

I cannot rest here long, yet I sing my merry song"
"Oh yes! so merry—so merry!" she burst again into
horrible laughter; the old man's blood ran cold to hear
it; he cried with all his heart,

"Miserable being—try to lift up thy soul in prayer. Pray—and thy griefs will pass away, even as the storm is now fleeing from before the face of the moon. Life—"

"Life? and who is to bring the dead to life? who can set his bleeding head on his body again-"

"Oh, God! Who can this be?" cried poor old Schwarz.

The drops were plashing down from the roof,

"That is his blood; fit is dropping, dropping—His precious blood—Oh! I cannot staunch it——"

The words died away in a feeble wail, and then a kind

of stupor seemed to have fallen upon her.

After listening intently for a while, Schwarz felt his way out at the door. There was a charcoal burner's hut not far off, he groped his way to it, and called to the man to come out and help him,

"There's a poor mad thing that has broken loose in the storm, thou must help me to take her down to the town," he said.

The man good-naturedly roused his two comrades; the three put on their clothes and returned to the little chapel with old Schwarz. Soon after a woman appeared carrying a torch of lighted flax,

"God be merciful to us all!" she cried, as the glare fell on Elizabeth, crouched on the ground, "This is the

lady from the Büchsenhaus, I know her well!"

"A most excellent lady!" said Schwarz, "There never was a sick or sorrowful soul came to her but she tried to comfort them. Can this in truth be she, poorer and sadder than any Christian soul ever was before, I think? Great God! how wonderful are Thy ways! And yet Thou lovest us. Aye! even through such awful dispensations as this we must believe that Thou lovest us-We must try if we can't get this poor lady home—They will be seeking her everywhere."

The men collected some branches and wove them hastily into a rude litter. On this they laid Elizabeth's poor unconscious form. Then they set forth, the woman leading old Schwarz by the arm, and carrying a torch of twisted hemp dipped in tar, to light them on their way.

The wind had died away, but it was very dark. The storm was drifting towards the south. From time to time a gleam of lightning from the receding thunder clouds illumined the distant mountain peaks. Suddenly however, the wind rose again, the rain poured down, forked lightnings began to play all around them, the thunder reverberated from hill to hill in deafening crashes.

Elizabeth sprang up, roused from her torpor. In a frenzy of terror she shrieked,

"Where am I? What is this that you are doing to me? The fiends have got me!—Let me go—go—Don't you hear it? They call it God's voice—It is his voice. He calls me out of the storm—see those towers—a white figure—all bloody—It is Wilhelm! He has come home—He calls me—Wilhelm—Wilhelm—I am coming!—coming!"

With superhuman strength she tore herself from the men's detaining grasp. In a moment she was standing on the very brink of the precipice that falls sheer down by the Büchsenhaus Güfel, to the meadow behind the castle. They saw the flutter of a garment—then it was gone———

They ran round by the path leading down by the Fall Bach ravine. There, on the grass, close by the great beech tree, where she had so often loved to sit, lay her mangled remains.

They knelt down beside the poor lifeless thing, they listened while the blind man poured out a fervent prayer that light might now be given her—that this poor distraught being might be taken to God's eternal rest.

Leaving Schwarz to watch by the dead woman the

rest then hurried away to tell the dreadful news at the Buchsenhaus.

Before many minutes had gone by, the storm had lulled. A long sigh seemed to breathe along the mountain sides; the stars came out, one by one; and presently the moon began to rise from behind the crest of the Weiherberg. Soon her soft effulgence was flooding all the valley below him; but to the poor old man her beams were as darkness. And yet a bright ray of faith shone down into his heart, brighter, more beautiful, than the moonbeam; it comforted and supported him in this sad vigil. He felt for his viola, his constant companion. unslung it from his shoulders, and soon the simple old hymn was rising towards the starlit sky over the shattered corpse of that martyred woman. It seemed as though a gentle entreaty for pardon was borne up along that bright viewless path to the invisible throne, before which Elizabeth's freed spirit might at that moment be standing.

Ferdinand paced his chamber in great agitation. Father Hyacinth was with him; he had almost concluded his account of the last dreadful hour of Biener's life. "Those words" said the good Dominican, "are stamped upon my memory. If I were to repeat them to you ten times I could not change one word. 'I have no proof,' he said, 'of what I state, but perhaps when I am dead he will believe that I was innocent, he may think more justly of me.' Those were his last words; the terrible sword came flashing down—and all was over. His body had not been placed upon the bier when the messenger came running all breathless, to say that he was pardoned!"

The Duke gave way to great agitation for a time. Then he said, in a low and broken voice, "Father! I can but thank you. You have my poor thanks for all that you have done—for all that you have told me now. My sorrow, my pain, are too great for words. Cannot you understand how bitter it must be to me that my good intention was all in vain? That an accident should have made all our efforts fruitless—"

"But how if it was no accident, your Highness?"

"Do not suggest that, it is too horrible a thought."

"I believe it—I believe it devoutly. Your Highness has heard, how that your messenger was delayed, hindered. My conviction is that he was purposely kept back, that it was a plot——"

"Do not say so—I cannot bear it—the matter shall be carefully investigated however. Woe be to the man who could misuse his power so frightfully in order to frustrate my commands, my good intentions. That man's punishment shall indeed be grievous."

"Will punishing any man undo what has been done? Will it bring back the innocent to life? Can the murdered——"

"Father! think what you are saying, murdered? He was not murdered—not if the report of his trial is to be trusted, if the law decided justly. The sentence may have been needlessly severe, at least it was not altogether undeserved."

For a few minutes he strode up and down moodily. Then he stopped before the Dominican. Father Hyacinth stood there looking down, his face full of sadness. Ferdinand added in a calmer tone,

"I conjure you, I entreat you as you value your holy office, to speak, is it your opinion that Biener was guiltless—absolutely guiltless?"

"Yes! I believe that he was wholly innocent. As I hope for the salvation of my soul, I swear it. Death strips the mask from all human creatures. Only a conscience

utterly pure and good could have supported that man as he was supported, could have enabled him to die as he did die."

"Guiltless!" cried Ferdinand in an agonised voice, and he flung himself into a chair, "It is a frightful thought! How I wish I could fly from it—must I believe it? Father, save me from so terrible a doom as to believe it—innocent? Have I then shed innocent blood? Are my hands red with it, miserable wretch that I am! Father—rulers are most unhappy men. God gives us His own boundless power, but how madly we use it—being denied His omniscience."

"His goodness and mercy must not be impugned. My Prince, you need no omniscience, you only need to use your power with moderation, with discretion. The sword given into your charge must not be trusted to unworthy instruments. It must not be used as a plaything."

"Father! You are right. The sword had left my hand—It was used to gratify men's base passions. Henceforth it shall be very different with me," Ferdinand cried, and he sprang to his feet with a look of determination. "But I have great need of a wise counsellor. Come often to visit me, good Father! Or stay, better still, stay always near me."

"I cannot, your Highness, I have no power to do so, nor am I a man of the world. In the turmoil of Court life I should be quite useless. Since I saw that man's execution all my peace of mind has fled; my life is poisoned, my rest is gone. The horrible spectacle is always before my eyes; night and day it haunts me—Now, even, I see it—I must strive by prayer and penance to drive it away. If I can get leave from my Superior to retreat from the world, I will go back to my native valley. There I will pray for your Highness. I

will pray that God's peace may descend upon you—that you may be one day of the number of His chosen people."

The good Monk then withdrew, leaving Ferdinand

sunk in dark and remorseful thoughts.

Marello came in after a while. The fellow was primed as usual, with gossip, and quite ready to open his budget if it might divert his master; but having been eavesdropping during the interview that was just over he feared to begin too soon.

"Per Dio," he muttered to himself, "at any rate, I must try to drive away questa melancholia. It is perilous. Ma, but how, friend Marello, how can'st thou compass it? I have it! Yes, now's the time to play our trump card!"

He slipped out as noiselessly as he had come in. Soon he re-appeared holding a letter in his hand; he laid it down where the Duke's eyes might fall on it, then he approached, saying in a voice of much solicitude as Ferdinand sighed deeply.

"Is your Highness ill at ease?"

"No—and yet I am so—Marello, I am ill, sick at heart. The blood of that innocent man is rising up in judgment against me."

"Innocent? Who has been so clever as to convince you of his innocence, Altezza? Now here, this moment, I am able to give your Highness a convincing proof that he was guilty—that it was only his stubborn pride and obstinacy that helped him to keep up the pretence of innocence to the very end. Altezza, may I give you this proof?"

Ferdinand turned from him with aversion, "The man who has just left me cannot lie, I will believe his testimony. I see it all now, my fatal credulity, my madness! How am I to meet my brother? How am I

to account to Sigismund for what has been done. What account shall I render of this horrible deed?"

"But I can prove that he was at least not wholly guiltless. Altezza must not distress himself so needlessly!"

"If you could do that I might reproach myself less bitterly."

"Here is proof that he had intercepted letters addressed to your Hghness. The man who is capable of doing so much wrong, may do more."

"Fellow! Has any such letter been found amongst Biener's papers? Where is it? Give it me instantly!"

"I got it a short time ago from President Schmaus," said Marello, slightly taken aback by this unexpected warmth.

"And you have dared to keep it from me, villain?"

"Di misericordia—I was only waiting for a good chance of delivering it. While the wretched man lived I did not care to add to his many offences by letting your Highness know of another crime. Now it cannot harm him—ecco la lettera—See, the seal and coat of arms of Duchess Claudia!"

Ferdinand seized the packet with a faltering hand. He held it and gazed long at it, his lips forming some broken sentences, "Mother! Yes, it is your own hand! My God! If it should be the very letter the monk alluded to! Did Biener only speak the truth? Was he indeed guiltless?"

Then he read the letter through. His limbs shook, he sank almost fainting on the couch—the letter, now so useless, so powerless to help, fluttered to the ground.

The terrified Marello tried vainly to restore Ferdinand to himself again. Then he ran to seek for help.

As he sped along the corridor he met the Duchess

on her way to early mass. Hearing of her husband's illness she flew to him. She hung over him with tender words, with tears of pity and sympathy. Her voice at last roused him from his stupor.

"Oh! Mother—mother—wretch that I am—" he murmured.

"Oh my best beloved, what can this mean?" she whispered.

"It is thou? I thought my mother spoke," he said very slowly as if awaking from a dream, "Mariana, weep for me, for I am the most miserable creature that lives. Read it, read the letter—read it to me, I will hear every word it says once more."

She picked it up-she read it in a voice choked with emotion. It said "My dearly loved-my most unhappy son—When these lines meet thine eyes the spirit of evil and the spirit of good may be striving within thee for mastery. From the unseen world I would speak to thee -I would help the good spirit to prevail. When thou hearest these words the fate of a good man may be hanging in the balance. From my tomb my voice would call to thee, it would say Biener is a good, a noble man. I am grateful to him, most grateful for all he has done for Hearken to thy mother, Ferdinand. Biener is incapable of any base or unworthy action. Hear the last petition I make to thee. Do not act towards him in a manner that will dishonour my memory. In full faith that thou wilt obey my last behest to thee, I bless thee. I am in the dread presence, even now, of death. I would not reproach my son, yet our last terrible interview has hastened my death. Thou art forgiven. Now I only conjure thee as the only atonement thou can'st make for the past to fulfil my last prayer to thee. Do not dishonour the memory of thy dying mother."

As she read, the young wife had often to stop to wipe

away her tears. She flung her arms round her husband, she cried in a voice of despair!

"Oh! my beloved, my dearest, what a grief for thee!"

"Do not touch me—such a wretch as I should not be caressed by any good woman. Thou should'st shrink from me. Dost thou not smell the blood of the innocent on my hands? My mother's blood too. I have killed my mother—I have murdered Biener—I am become a spectacle to make men and angels weep."

"I will never leave thee—I love thee. Thou must not despair. It was fate, cruel fate, that did it all—Thou art innocent of it—"

"And I do not deserve her blessing!" he cried; he struck his forehead with his clenched hands, then he clasped and wrung them together in a kind of frenzy, "She only blessed me if I should obey her—she would never have blessed a murderer—"

"Oh! my love, my love" she cried tenderly, fervently, "Take heart We will share it—this dreadful grief. Masses shall be said, we will pray, oh! so fervently! They will accept our penitence—they will yet be reconciled to us."

"Thou true, good soul! My own, my long suffering, injured wife. Yes, on thee I will rest—Thou art my best guide, my comforter, my consolation—Marello! Quit my presence—quit this land! Had I but received that letter sooner all this horror would have been spared me, spared us all. Go! Never let me see your face again. Come, my Mariana, we will try to make what poor amends we may. The burden of my sin may in time be lighter; let us pray that it may be so."

CHAPTER XX.

AFTERWARDS.

T was late autumn. The higher mountains werealready white, and in the valleys the snow only melted under the beams of the mid-day sun. A strong south wind was blowing, stripping the trees of the few red and yellow leaves still reluctant to fall. The branches groaned and creaked dismally round the house of Angerzell; but within everything looked festive and bright. Preparations for yet another banquet on a grand scale were going on briskly. Covers were laid for thirty guests; waxlights blazed in every room; their light was reflected from the costly satin hangings and polished surfaces that shimmered all around. Nicklaus was busied in filling and setting out flagons and great glass ewers filled with costly wines, on the buffet that filled up one end of the dining-room. While he was thus occupied his master joined him. Schmauslooked strangely shrunken and aged; and his great obesity was gone. His face looked shrivelled and lined. though red as formerly; his eyes were bloodshot and bleared, and yet they shone with an unnatural lurid glow. The air of solid contentment which had so long characterised him was gone, he wandered restlessly up and down his house with a perturbed and anxious air.

"More candles!" he cried, "Let us have light, plenty of light—It is dark and gloomy still."

"Gracious Herr President! There are twenty wax lights in the corridor alone—I can't find room for any

more" said the old servant in a deprecating tone.

"Blockhead !-- I say it is too dark--We must have more candles; we must drive away this horrible gloom," thundered Schmaus, "Yonder long shadows dancing about on the walls are enough to drive a man out of his senses-Mind you tell the cook she is not to over roast the pheasants; the flesh should melt in the mouth as if it was alive. Well! all seems to be ready. Why don't they come? I'm sure it is past eight o'clock long ago."

"But, Gracious Herr President, it has only just struck

seven 1"

"How dark it is-I can't endure this season of the year; it's always so dismal when the leaves fall."

A shudder crept over him, half frightened, half angry, he called out "Draw the curtains, those window panes are like glittering eyes staring in at one. It is dreadful waiting here all alone! Why can't they come?"

Nicklaus did as he was bid: then his master summoned him once more. He had sunk into the elbow chair at the head of his table, and was mopping his brow and breathing heavily.

"Gracious Herr President has changed much latterly," the faithful old creature ventured to say, "He is never merry now as he used to be."

"What's that to thee? Thou might'st get me a glass of Parfait Amour to help to revive me, rather than stand chattering there so senselessly."

Nicklaus hesitated, "Gracious Herr President should hearken to his old servant's voice; strong liquors are not good for him."

"Don't trouble thy old brain about that," said Schmaus, and he tossed off a bumper of the rich cordial

Patting the faithful old man on the cheek, he added

"With thine everlasting Gracious Herr President! Old Nicklaus, thou'lt soon have to call me by a greater name than that. Good times are coming to thy master at last. Now I've neither chick nor child to vex me; I've no enemy to dread; and they're going to give me what I ought to have had many a long year ago. Another glass, Nicklaus! all's going well and smoothly with me at last."

"Gracious Herr President—I can't help it—but I do feel so anxious and miserable! Would my gracious lord go and see his lady? She has been asking for him so often already this evening."

"Better she should leave me in peace. First she plagued me with her worldly counsels, and now she's always deafening me with her eternal sermons!"

Nicklaus shrugged his shoulders, "She does want badly to see my gracious master—Here she comes herself."

Schmaus would fain have escaped, but his wife came so swiftly upon him that he had no resource but to receive her. She was a ghastly apparition, her long attenuated form clad in the black dress of a sister of mercy, her face haggard and of an ashen hue.

"Why do you come gliding in like a ghost in that way?" cried Schmaus, "What is it you want with me?"

"I am no ghost; but I am haunted by many dreadful visions—I have no rest, no peace—It is not yet a year since our poor child died; let me beseech you to hold no revels here to-night. My poor Loys—My most unhappy girl!—That other dreadful thing haunts me, that deed I cannot name—Is this a time for feasting and junketting?"

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"Silence, with thy reasons! What folly-what

superstition !--old wives tales, I say."

"Husband," she said solemnly, "Thou can'st not blind me to facts—why try to blind thyself to them? There is a hunted look in thine eyes, terror in thine aspect. Would that thou had'st listened to my warning, that thy hands were cleansed from innocent blood. As I walk in the street, I hear the people whisper 'See! that is the wife of the man who is under a curse.' They look at me as if to find out whether the curse may have begun to work yet. I do beseech thee, call it not down upon our heads to-night by feasting thus iniquitously!"

Schmaus laughed aloud, but there was little mirth in the sound, "Thou art grown fanatical," he said.

"Yes! I have become a fanatic. I see now how black my sins have been—my child's most miserable fate, herdeath, opened my eyes to the great realities of life. My pride is broken; a nameless terror is always upon me now. To-night it grows unbearable. Let me entreat thee not to hold this banquet!"

"Fool! would'st make me a town's talk?"

"Even for a day—one day—put it off; only to-night do not let them come—Grant me this last prayer! I will never ask thee to grant me another. Thou can'st truly say that thou art indisposed, ill at ease."

"And see them point their fingers at me and cry 'See how the curse is working!' No! reason the more that my friends should come to-night, that I should appear more debonair, more jovial than ever. Go! Some one comes, do not show them that face of thine, like a mourner's at a funeral—'Twould spoil any man's appetite to but look at such a creature!"

The poor lady withdrew by another door while Schmaus hastened to welcome a coming guest. He-

started back in surprise to meet Vollmar's tall form in the doorway, wrapped in a travelling cloak.

"Thou did'st not look for this pleasure, cousin, and yet I shall scarcely be denied a seat at the festive board neither, I guess?"

"The party will not be much to thy taste," said Schmaus smiling significantly.

"Oh! I know, I am aware with whom thou hast consorted of late. Well, I will relieve you of your difficulty—I really have no wish to spoil sport—I have only called to say good-bye. I quit this country to-night, I I am going privately, I have my permit."

Schmaus was struck dumb with astonishment.

"Yes indeed, the Chancellorship is in the market once more," continued Vollmar lightly. "Why stare so, man? Don't we all know what thou hast been intriguing for all these years? And yet, my beloved cousin, I would exhort thee to be moderate in thine expectations. Don't count too surely on getting thy promotion. The hook was baited with the Chancellorship; but, mark my words, thou hast been betrayed. Count Ferrari is to be the new Chancellor. Thou wilt be served like the patient beast that draws the waggon to the barn door!"

"I can't grasp it. How has all this come about?"
"Why thus—I am shrewd enough to see how t

"Why thus—I am shrewd enough to see how they look upon me now at Court, I am shunned, in fact. The Duke repents him of Biener's death, his remorse grows upon him every day. Who knows what he might be induced to do? He might turn upon those very men who were thought to have acted by his command, while they were making tool of him. Who can assure us that the secret may not get abroad? Poisons dissolve the earthen pots they are placed in. Those who are silent only from motives of self-interest may any day find their account in betraying their accomplices. I will make

sure that a second State Chancellor does not share Biener's fate. My services shall not be rewarded in that fashion! I have given in my resignation, I depart. Thou hast hurried my decision, cousin, just at the last."

"I can't think how it is then!"

"Was it not by thy advice that the Duke gave up his suzerainty over the Grisons?"

"The Grisons proposed to buy; it seemed a fair way to settle our differences with them."

"It did, truly, and a fair little golden rain descended into our treasury as a consequence of it. Suppose thou wert to carry on the same little game as Chancellor that has suited the President so well, every hillside in the Tyrol stands a chance of being mortgaged before many years are over. For my part, I don't approve of such goings on, so I have thrown up my Chancellorship."

"See that now! How scrupulous some folks can grow all in a minute," sneered Schmaus. "When their turn is served, when the man they hate has come by his death, they can afford to turn honest."

"It appears to me thou hast to answer to thy conscience for the larger share in that business, my good fellow!"

"No—no—I protest I was not the guilty party!" cried Schmaus, almost violently, "It was planned by thee, I only helped thee to execute it. All my share of it was cancelled by the Duke's pardon. If that pardon came too late was I answerable for it?"

"I don't shirk facts—I had my reasons. That man had it in his power to utterly ruin me. One of us had to go to the wall—I am standing here safe and sound, my secret is my own, who is to blame me? Who will accuse me? They may suspect me as much as they like, but who can prove anything? I am not a milk-

sop, I bear myself like a man. I need no strong drink to deaden the voice of my conscience. Fare-thee-well, my cousin! Thy guests arrive, I depart—Well for thee if thou had'st my nerves."

The guests now arriving could discern a muffled form gliding away between the tree stems in the garden. Ferrari, Gröbner, Bocciclave, Pappus, Hippoliti and many others were following each other now in rapid succession.

Soon all were in the full swing of the revel. Brains waxed hot, voices rose, yet real mirth was wanting. In its stead noisy laughter and senseless jests prevailed.

Schmaus filled his glass at every pause; he talked with Ferrari aside,

"Yes, yes, you are right" the latter remarked, "His Highness must not be annoyed by any affairs, more especially money affairs, just at present."

"All is amicably arranged as regards the Grisons. The Duke can sign the papers to-morrow. They pay us down one hundred thousand thalers, His Highness relinquishes his suzerainty over the canton. Your Excellency pockets ten thousand as commission. You amply deserve it for your trouble and skill in bringing matters to a conclusion."

"If you insist—why I suppose it must be so. Let us touch glasses on the bargain. To-morrow we can lay our heads together and find some good investment for the ten thousand thalers."

They laughed, their glasses rang, Schmaus tossed off the contents of his at one gulp.

"Our host sets us a good example, he means to lose as little time as possible in getting drunk," said Bocciclave.

"'Tis said he is ill at ease. His flesh falls away strangely." replied Gröbner.

"Ill at ease—How so?"

"The Innsbruck folk allege that the ghost of Biener's wife haunts him. You know she cursed him; she summoned him to appear before the judgment seat and answer for her husband's murder before the leaves should all have fallen."

"Superstition—The people are always looking for signs and wonders."

"So you and I may say, but all don't agree with us. For my part, I never did love Biener. I freely confess I am glad to be rid of him. Happily, it does not concern me, I am not answerable for his death. But I don't wonder that Schmaus should shake in his shoes, the leaves are nearly all gone now."

"No saying, there may be something in it."

"When all's said and done, Biener only came by what he deserved. Why, have I not heard him blaspheme against our Holy Catholic Church with my own ears? I'll tell you a queer thing that has just happened. You remember old Abraham May the money-changer? Well! he took the curse home to himself—The very day after he was told of it he was found dead in his bed. His wife has gone to join her daughter and Henrici in Augsburg."

"The man had lived to a great age. No wonder he should die," said Pappus, "The only wonder is that he

lived so long."

"You poets are a race of sceptics—Well, how do you account for Bishop Perkhofer's strange condition? You know who I mean, Bocciclave?"

"I do indeed, the man who deprived the Convent at Wilton of sanctuary when Biener took refuge there. He spoke at that cursed Diet in Duchess Claudia's reign. What of him?"

"He is in exactly the same condition as the Duke here. He has turned melancholy mad. It seems he

told Biener at that very Diet that his right hand should be chopped off by the executioner. Well! the thing really did come to pass. The Bishop has taken it to heart just as if he was answerable for it. Let us talk of something less lugubrious. My hair begins to bristle, my flesh to creep—my blood runs cold."

Schmaus had drunk deeply, recklessly. He looked wild and mad. Gröbner's last words caught his ear, he sprang to his feet.

"Blood? Who talks of blood? We'll have no blood here but the blood of the grape," he shouted. "What matters it what folly they may talk? Do I care for the babble of fools? Is there any man here present who dares to assert that I am guilty of innocent blood?"

The guests all rose from the table, horrified. Those nearest to Schmaus tried to pacify him, it was all in vain. He seized a large goblet, filled it to the brim with strong liquor, and cried in a voice of thunder, "Think you I quake because of the talk of silly women? Here I stand, well and strong, and many an autumn's leaves I shall see fall. Pledge me, friends! Long may we live, merry may we be!"

They touched glasses with him all round, fearing to refuse, but looking scared as they complied. He drained the huge goblet to its dregs—a crash was heard—it had fallen from his hand. A horrible yell followed—From between the purple lips of the unfortunate wretch a light bluish flame was seen to issue. The strong cordial, full of acqua vitæ, had ignited inwardly—He was burning—

Fear and horror seized upon all present; they rushed tumultuously from the chamber. They left behind them, lying in its chair at the head of the board, only a hideously charred, half-consumed corpse.

Old Nicklaus and the dead man's wife rushed in.

Filled with terror they stood gazing at the ghastly spectacle. Their forebodings had been, indeed, too frightfully realized!

In the early spring time the Passeyerthal looks green and lovely. The eleven Schildhofe look down pleasantly over it from the hills around. The pretty village of St. Leonard with its trim wooden balconies, lies peacefully basking in the morning sun, a clear trout stream rushing gaily over its pebbly bed hard by.

The Jansenberg, as well as all the more distant mountains, shone white against a deep blue sky; the brown lines of the chestnut groves sharply defined

against their snowy background.

Afra was sitting outside a solid little stone house, high up on the hill side, cutting great slices of bread and laying them neatly in a deep dish for the midday meal. She was still quite colourless, and traces of all that she had endured were visible round her eyes and mouth; but her eyes were clear, serene, and sensible. If now and then a cloud gathered it soon passed away again. It was easy to see that the peaceful life in her native valley had healed her troubled spirit, soothed her heart. The gentle and wise teachings of the good priest of the village had helped to guide this poor bewildered lamb back into the fold again. He taught her to leave mysteries too deep for human comprehension, to not try to unravel what has been purposely left so vague, to vield herself to the guidance of that Divine hand which alone can lead us out of darkness into light. When old Schildhofer came back to her, bringing with him little Benedict, she devoted herself to the child with a tender yearning love that did more to heal her aching heart than even the peaceful scenes of her childhood, or the kind ministrations of the parish priest.

Then a new life seemed to open to her. Her motherly instincts found their natural healthy outlet. The orphaned boy repaid her devotion with a most warm affection. The frightful things he had seen seemed to have robbed him of all childish merriment, he was silent and quiet, yet always sweet and good. Smilesrarely lighted up his little face, and he never asked about his parents.

Afra took him to her heart at once. Here was a young creature on whom she might, without fear or sense of wrong doing, spend all the wealth of her love, at last. What a beautiful thank offering might she not give to God, if only she could become a mother to this poor little one!

In the course of a few months after Benedict's arrival the household was still further increased. One day an unexpected and most welcome visitor arrived. He was received by old Schildhofer with undisguised delight; Afra's cheek flushed, for one brief moment, rosy red, but the lovely glow faded as quickly as it had come, like the brief gleam that sometimes illumines hill and dale at the close of a stormy day, shewing how beautifully the sun can gild all nature when not obscured by clouds.

The new comer was Franz!

His fall from the window of the fortress had been happily broken by the trees and shrubs growing in the court below, and he had sufficient strength and sense left to drag himself over the garden wall by the help of the fruit trees growing against it.

As he was dragging himself painfully along he cameto a cottage; the good people kindly sheltered and concealed him from pursuit, and here he lay for weeks, hovering between life and death. At length he gained sufficient strength to enable him to make his way slowly from house to house across the mountains, till at last his feet carried him to the spot where his heart had always been, to Afra's side. He had made up his mind that he would speak no more to her of love or marriage. Even if he should find her recovered from her malady, the past should be forgotten. He would be only as a brother to her—a son to the old man.

Afra had come out to be near little Benedict who was preparing his lesson in the sun this bright morning. The child's fair head was bent over a little book; he was to have his first lesson in the rudiments of Latin from the good priest by-and-bye. She was so much absorbed in watching the boy that she was unconscious of the earnest gaze fixed on her by both her white-haired old father and Franz. The latter wore a peasant's dress; he had just come in from working in the fields, and looked stronger and in better health already.

Raising her eyes the girl met a look so sad, so wistful, bent upon her that she was startled by it. Again looking down she seemed to reflect deeply for a few minutes; then she reddened slightly, rose, and went across to where he stood, held out her hand and said quietly—firmly,

"Thou good Franz! I understand thee—Thou shalt not think that I am ungrateful. I don't deserve half of all that thou hast done for me—that thou are still doing every day of thy life for us—I have spoilt thy whole career. Thou lost thy liberty, thy health for my sake. Thou art just like a son to my dear old father, working as a born peasant for him, morning noon and night. I can never reward thee as I ought—but—Franz—let us two never part again. If thou can'st be patient with me, if thou still hast that in thy heart thou had'st long ago—I will keep my old promise now—I will be thy wife."

He took her gently, tenderly, into his arms. At first,

he could find no words to thank her as he longed to do—but at last he was able to speak—He said,

"Afra! thou hast made me unspeakably happy!—My own love, I have not deserved this; God has given thee to me at last! Let us walk before Him humbly, uprightly. His blessed light may fall upon us yet more fully as time wears on—Afra, we will be father and mother to little Benedict here."

Old Schildhofer joined their hands silently. He was offering up a prayer of thanksgiving, a petition that their union might be blessed.

From henceforth all went happily with them in their little home, there was not much mirth but infinite contentment and peace.

That lovely bright soft season was like the Indian summer of their lives, when the leaves fall the more rapidly the brighter the sunshine.

Afra and Franz remained childless. Little Benedict, as Franz had promised, was their sole care and delight. They did not live to an advanced age; they followed one another to the grave quietly, peacefully, almost like shades of the past. Afra's strength failed her gradually. The fragile plant tried to put forth a few buds, but it had no vitality left to blossom into new life. Franz had been injured seriously by his terrible fall. When Afra was taken from him he only lingered behind her for a short time. Then the old peasant found himself quite alone. Yet he bore his shield bravely, proudly, to the end of his long life. He laid it down unblemished,—as he had carried it through life—when he went to his honoured grave.

As years went by, Duke Ferdinand grew wiser, and yet many of his best resolves remained unfulfilled. The party in power prevailed with him so far as to put a stop to any further investigations as to Biener's death. The

chief culprits were gone, Schmaus was dead, Vollmar in retirement. Forgotten, inglorious, he ended his days at Regensburg, regretted by few, mourned by no one.

Every trace of the Lutheran faith had soon been stamped out of the Tyrol. The men of Schwatz were put to the sword, for the most part; the few who survived fled to a more kindly soil.

The Tyrolese Court remained extravagantiand brilliant as of old; yet all Ferdinand's eager enjoyment of life was gone. His former pleasures had lost their zest though they still seemed necessary to him. The only hours he could be said to pass happily were those cheered by his wife's presence. When he died, still a young man, she stood by him holding his hand, strengthening and supporting him. He left no child, and his good, wise, brother Sigismund succeeded to the Crown.

Then it was that the sycophants who had so long preyed upon Ferdinand fled hastily, fearing to be called to account for a dishonest stewardship.

With Sigismund the Counts of the Tyrol ceased to reign as independent Sovereigns. He died unmarried, poisoned accidentally by his physician.

The family of Biener too is extinct. Rudolph had been recalled from banishment, and re-instated in possession of the Büchsenhaus. But his father's dreadful fate left a chill gloom hanging over his life that could never be lightened.

Franzl took the veil; she went back to the good. Sisters at Hall, whose doors opened gladly to her.

When old Schildhofer died Benedict was adopted by the good Father Hyacinth. He trained him for the Catholic priesthood, and finally he became curé of the parish of St. Leonard. The crucifix his father had clasped to his dying breast hung always by his side. Austere to himself, he was tolerant and loving to all the world beside. The simple country folk amongst whom his life was spent, came, at last, to regard him as a saint. When his tired eyes at last were closed in death, after his long ministry amongst them, at the great age of ninety-two, Claudia's blessing had been fulfilled—he had gained that peace which passeth all understanding.

A headstone in the churchyard of Hötting, bearing the simple letters E. B. marks the spot where poor Elizabeth was buried. The peasants still speak of her; they believe that her spirit can find no rest because she doubted God's goodness, that it wanders round the ruined and deserted walls of the Büchsenhaus still. The belated traveller who seeks shelter from the storm, says an Ave as he listens for the rustling of her garments through those long and echoing passages and he murmurs a prayer for the soul of the phantom Biener Frau.

Biener is not forgotten in the Tyrol, the peasants talk of him still. Dim and misty his image appears, looking out at us from the pages of the past, a frightful instance of the ruthless power a Sovereign might wield in those olden days, we are so apt to look back to with regret.

Two centuries have gone by since he lived, and the remorseless spirit of modern progress has at last disturbed his quiet rest in the churchyard at Rattenburg.

The iron road has come, winding its way by the river's brink. It has burrowed beneath the rock on which the frowning fortress once stood so proudly.

Beneath the very place of Biener's execution the trains glide in, the railway whistle reverberates.

When digging to level for the line the workmen disturbed a grave. They turned up to the light of day a human skeleton, and with it a metal coffin plate bearing the date 17—7—1651.

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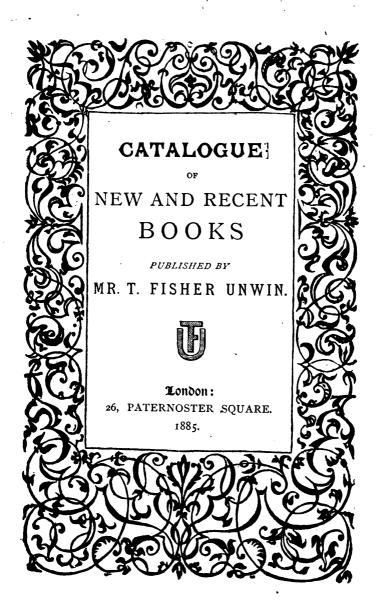
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